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Scotland vol II.

AN ENQUIRY

INTO THE NATURE OF THE

CORN-LAWS;

WITH A VIEW TO THE

NEW CORN-BILL

PROPOSED FOR

SCOTLAND.

EDINBURGH:

Printed by and for Mrs MUNDELL, Old Excise-office, Cowgate.

M,DCC,LXXVII.

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

HENRY DUNDAS of MELVIL,

LORD ADVOCATE

FOR

SCOTLAND.

My LORD,

I BEG leave to inſcribe this ſmall tract to your Lordſhip, as to one of whoſe talents and diſpoſition I entertain a very high opinion. It can lay claim to one merit at leaſt, that of being written with candour, with a cordial deſire to promote the real happineſs and proſperity of all the inhabitants of Scotland.

IF it ſhall be found to deſerve your Lordſhip's attention; and if it ſhall have the good fortune to obtain a ſerious and attentive peruſal from others who are intereſted in the ſubject of which it treats, the wiſhes of the author will be accom-

 pliſhed;

pliſhed; for he is not ſo deſirous of having his own ideas on this ſubject adopted by others, as to induce them to be *certain* that any other ſyſtem that may be adopted ſhall at leaſt be equally beneficial to the public.

I have the honour to be, with the moſt reſpectful eſteem,

My LORD,

Your Lordſhip's moſt obedient

and moſt humble ſervant,

MONKSHILL, Dec. 15. 1777.

JA^{s} ANDERSON.

AN INQUIRY, &c.

Introduction.

THE writer of this ſmall tract has read over with attention all the publications that have come to his hand, relating to the propoſed corn-bill for Scotland, in hopes that the ſubject of the corn-laws would be ſo fully elucidated by the different authors, as to enable the well-intentioned citizen to know with ſome degree of certainty in what manner the law ought to be framed, ſo as to prove moſt beneficial to the community at large. He thinks this is a matter of too much importance to be looked upon with indifferenc; and as this object appears to him in a light very different from that in which it ſeems to have been viewed by others, he has been induced at length, though late, to take up the pen, with a view to ſuggeſt to his countrymen ſuch remarks as have occurred to himſelf in reflecting on that ſubject; which he ſubmits to their conſideration with the greater willingneſs, that he is not conſcious of being biaſſed in favour of any party, but is equally deſirous of moderating the exceſſes of the one as of the other. To render this matter the more intelligible, I ſhall firſt premiſe ſome general obſervations, and then apply theſe to our own particular caſe at preſent.

PART FIRST.

General obſervations. The bounty on corn approved of by all.

IN one important particular relating to this queſtion, all parties ſeem to agree; that is, in admitting that a bounty on the exportation of grain, judiciouſly applied, may prove highly beneficial to the country. This ſeems to be ſo generally the ſenſe of the nation at preſent, as renders it unneceſſary here to take up the reader's time in producing any arguments in ſupport of it.

IN

That the price of grain at home will be regulated by the importation-rate denied, except in certain cases.

IN another particular the writers on both ſides of the queſtion ſeem to be agreed, *viz.* in believing that the price of grain will be effectually regulated by the rate at which it ſhall be allowed to be imported. Upon this, as an acknowledged truth that needs not to be proved, both parties reaſon with much keenneſs. But here I muſt beg leave to diſſent from both; and if it can be proved that this opinion is erroneous, all the reaſoning that depends upon it muſt fall to the ground; and with it ought to fall all thoſe illiberal prejudices that have ſprung from the ſame ſource.

THAT the price of grain, in years *of great ſcarcity*, muſt be in ſome meaſure regulated by the rate at which importation is permitted, will not be denied: for on theſe occaſions, if there is not enough of grain in the country itſelf to ſupport the whole of its inhabitants, that deficiency muſt be ſupplied by importation from ſome other country; as that importation cannot be permitted, till neceſſity has raiſed the price in the home-market to the rate at which it is fixed by law, however exorbitant that price may be. It does not, however, from hence follow, either that the price of grain will in general be nearly equal to the importation-rate, if that is exorbitantly high, or that it will ſink nearly ſo far, if that ſhould be placed immoderately low; for the average-price of grain muſt depend on other circumſtances that are by no means inſeparably connected with the legal importation-rate.

The price of grain is regulated by the proportion between the demand and the quantity brought to market.

THE price of any commodity, but eſpecially of ſuch periſhable commodities as grain, will always be regulated by the proportion that ſubſiſts between the demand for it and the quantity that can be brought to market at any place and time. If more grain is offered to ſale at any time than the purchaſers have occaſion for, part of it muſt remain unſold; and if it does not appear that this has been occaſioned by circumſtances merely caſual, thoſe who have immediate occaſion for money, or who wiſh to be freed of the expence and riſk of keeping it, will agree to part with it at a very low rate; nor will any purchaſers appear unleſs that rate is extremely low, for fear they may not get it again diſpoſed of with profit. Hence it follows, that a little more brought to market than anſwers the effective demand, continued for any time, occaſions a very great fall of the price. On the other hand, if the quantity of grain brought to market

falls

falls but a very little ſhort of the effective demand for it at the time; and if that deficiency ſhall appear in ſeveral ſucceeding market-days, thoſe who find themſelves in want, afraid of being deprived of it entirely, will agree to give for it almoſt any price the ſeller chooſes to demand. In this manner the prices continually vibrate in every market, and always finally ſettle according to the rule above mentioned. The price, therefore, at which importation is permitted can never regulate the price of grain in the home-market; except in years of ſcarcity, when the price of grain riſes higher than that for which it can be afforded in other countries, or when the quantity reared at home is not ſufficient to ſupply the whole of the demand. In all other caſes it muſt be the price that can be drawn for it, in ſome other acceſſible market, that muſt finally determine the price at home.

IF it thus appears, that a high importation-rate cannot operate in raiſing the price of grain, except in years of ſcarcity, ſo neither would the importation-rate, if fixed extremely low, inſure cheapneſs to the inhabitants of this country. At whatever rate importation ſhould be permitted, it could have no effect in lowering the market-price, unleſs corn could be imported cheaper from ſome other country than it could be raiſed for by our own farmers; but if, from a ſuperior degree of fertility in other countries than our own, corn could frequently imported cheaper than our own farmers could rear it, our farmers would be obliged to deſert that employment, and betake themſelves to ſome other one, and the country muſt then be ſupplied with grain chiefly from abroad. In this caſe, it would be the price it could be bought for in foreign countries, or the rate at which it could be afforded for by our own farmers that would regulate the price, and not the price at which importation is permitted.

The rate at which importation is permitted can have but little influence on the average price of grain

IT thus appears, that thoſe who keenly contend either for a very high or a very low importation-rate, expreſs an undue eagerneſs for a circumſtance that is but very immaterial in itſelf for anſwering the purpoſe each of them have in view; as it cannot have very much effect in regulating the general average price of grain.

It is, however, of importance that the importation-price be neither too high nor too low.

NEVERTHELESS it does not follow, that the price at which importation ſhall be permitted is of little conſequence to the nation; for it will require but little trouble to ſhow that if it ſhall be

be either unreaſonably low, or diſproportionably high, it muſt be productive of very pernicious effects upon the community at large, unleſs theſe effects are counteracted by ſome other means; and that, in both caſes, it would tend equally to fruſtrate the views of the preſent advocates for the very high or the very low importation-price. This I ſhall endeavour briefly to explain, by tracing with accuracy the conſequences that would naturally reſult from the one or the other of theſe regulations.

AND *firſt*, Let us ſuppoſe that the favourers of the low importation-price had got their wiſhes accompliſhed. If that very low importation-rate ſhould be under the price at which the kind of corn in queſtion could be afforded for by our own farmers in ordinary years, (which for the ſake of the argument we muſt here ſuppoſe), it would follow, that if corn could be brought from any other country at that low price, many of our farmers would be under the neceſſity of abandoning that unprofitable employment: that in conſequence of this, much ground would be allowed to remain untilled, which in other circumſtances might have been cultivated with profit: leſs grain would thus be produced in this country, and rents in general would of courſe fall very conſiderably. All this is ſuppoſing, that, in years of great plenty, corn could be brought from other countries at a rate little, if at all higher than the import-price; if this was not ſo, the low import-rate could produce no manner of effect whatever.

The importation-rate if too low, would tend to lower the price in years of plenty:

IN theſe circumſtances, the law would ſeem to favour thoſe who think they eſpouſe the cauſe of the poor, and who are well pleaſed at every rub they can give to thoſe of high rank:—but we muſt trace the conſequence farther.

IT is evident, that, in conſequence of this regulation, the inhabitants would quickly be brought to the neceſſity of depending on others for their daily ſubſiſtence; and although in years of great plenty they might perhaps be abundantly ſupplied by foreign nations at a low rate;—What would become of them in times of general ſcarcity? Their own trifling crop would afford but a ſcanty pittance, and the ſupplies from abroad muſt be purchaſed at what price theſe foreigners pleaſe to demand for it, if they agree to part with it at any price; and that price muſt be farther heightened by the amount of freight, factorage, and

but would be productive of an exceſſive riſe of price in years of ſcarcity:

merchants

merchants profits, not to mention ſea-hazard, and the ſtill more dangerous riſk of loſſes in time of war from foreign enemies. In theſe circumſtances famine, with all its direful conſequences, would be unavoidable; and the poor would be thrown into a ſtate of diſtreſs infinitely greater than any thing we have occaſion to fear from laws enacted by a legiſlature ſo well informed in general as ours is at preſent.

and if too high,

LET us now ſee if the advocates for the high importation-rate would be nearer the purpoſe they have in view, ſhould the law be made to their liking.

it would raiſe the price exceſſively high in years of ſcarcity;

IN years of ſcarcity, it has been already ſhown, that this regulation would very much enhance the price of grain; and ſo long as theſe deficient crops ſhould continue, there can be no doubt but that the home-price would be kept up extremely high. In conſequence of theſe high prices, the farmers would exert themſelves as much as poſſible to raiſe more grain; and as the profits in that buſineſs would be thus encreaſed beyond that of any other employment, others, in hopes of ſharing in theſe profits, would wiſh to engage in that buſineſs; a competition for farms would thus be eſtabliſhed, and the rents would be conſiderably raiſed *(a)*. So far all ſucceeds according to the wiſhes of the advocates for this ſyſtem. The revenues of men of landed property would indeed be encreaſed; and it is perhaps to them a matter of ſmall concern what becomes of the other parts of the community. But ſeldom is ſuch ſelfiſh policy attended with ſucceſs; and we muſt now proceed to view the other ſide of the picture.

IN

(a) IN conſequence of this competition, it is plain, that although it were poſſible, by any political regulation, to raiſe the price of grain to a very exorbitant rate, and keep it ſo, this would be attended with no permanent advantage to the farmer. A temporary artificial riſe of price would, indeed, enrich the tenants at the time; but were this great price to continue, in conſequence of the concurrence already mentioned, farms would riſe proportionally in rent, and the farmers would reap juſt as little profit from their buſineſs as if the permanent price of grain were ever ſo low. A temporary riſe or depreſſion of price can only affect the farmers; a permanent riſe can only prove beneficial to the proprietors: the intereſts indeed of theſe two claſſes of people, as to this particular, are ſo diametrically oppoſite, that what proves bene-

 ficial

but in years of plenty would make it ſink intolerably low;

IN conſequence of this high encouragement for rearing corn, it cannot be doubted, but that in a ſhort time, much more of it would be reared than formerly; ſo that even if unfavourable ſeaſons ſhould continue, the quantity reared would be more than ſufficient to ſupply the home-market. But when favourable ſeaſons ſhould come, the quantity produced would be ſo diſproportionally great, that the price would ſink in the home-market immeaſurably low, and grain would become a perfect drug on the hands of the farmer, which he would not know how to get rid of. Farmers in theſe circumſtances would be unable to pay a rent, and bankruptcies muſt follow. That buſineſs, which of late was the moſt profitable, would now become beyond all proportion the leaſt ſo of any that could be followed; and every perſon would be now as eager to leave it, as they were formerly deſirous to engage in it. The ground would, therefore, be in a ſhort time much worſe cultivated than before; leſs abundant crops would be the conſequence, and the former high prices muſt in courſe return. Thus would the nation (unleſs in a long courſe of ſettled equal ſeaſons and crops) be kept in a perpetual ſtruggle between the bad effects of high and of low prices.

and would occaſion a perpetual fluctuation between the extremes of high and low prices.

Agriculture

ficial to the one can only be ſo in conſequence of its not being beneficial to the other. I take notice of this circumſtance here to remove the prejudices of the numerous body of the farmers, whoſe intereſt, on a ſuperficial view, ſeems to be connected with the *permanent* riſe in the price of grain, but which is entirely unconnected with it. Nothing is indeed more common than for artiſans of any particular profeſſion, extremely eager to adopt any regulation that ſeems to favour the particular calling they follow, firmly perſuaded that they will be permanently benefited by thoſe regulations. Such hope, however, is vain, and will be found at laſt illuſory. They do not at the time advert, that no ſooner ſhall it appear that their profits are great, than others will croud into that profeſſion, till in a ſhort time, from the extraordinary competition that this will occaſion, the profits will be reduced for a time lower than that of moſt other profeſſions. Regulations of this tendency, therefore, do never anſwer the end propoſed, and always prove extremely hurtful to the community, as they derange the ordinary courſe of buſineſs, keep the minds of men fluctuating and unſteady, that prevents them from either benefiting themſelves or the community, ſo much as by a uniform ſteady exertion of induſtry in one particular line.

Agriculture and manufactures would be equally diſcouraged; and every perſon in the ſtate, from the higheſt to the loweſt, would become ſucceſſive ſufferers by this injudicious regulation.

Scotland at preſent ſuffers ſome diſtreſs from this cauſe.

THIS is not a fancy-picture I draw. The effects of a regulation of this kind are juſt now experienced in ſome degree in Scotland (*a*). In conſequence of the efforts of farmers, and more tolerable ſeaſons for two years paſt than had been experienced for near a dozen of years before that period, (which had raiſed the price of grain on many occaſions above its proper medium price), the price of grain, oat-meal eſpecially, has fallen ſo very low, as to threaten very diſtreſsful conſequences. It was probably with a view to ward off theſe threatened ills that the law which gave occaſion to the preſent enquiry has been propoſed. Whether, in the form it was originally introduced, it would anſwer theſe ſalutary purpoſes or not, it imports us next to enquire.

An enquiry how theſe evils might be prevented.

A VERY ſlight degree of attention is ſufficient to diſcover, that the inconveniencies that reſult from both theſe extremes, might be effectually avoided, by fixing the importation-rate at a proper medium ſtandard, and by granting a bounty on exportation, properly proportioned to the circumſtances of the caſe. By the firſt of theſe inſtitutions, the farmer would be ſecured againſt the competition of foreign merchants in ordinary years; by the laſt, he might be enabled to ſend his grain to a foreign market in years of great plenty, without being under the neceſſity of ſelling at an unreaſonably low price. All that is neceſſary, therefore, in diſcuſſing the preſent queſtion, is to aſcertain, upon equitable principles, what might be deemed a medium price at which the particular kind of grain in queſtion ſhould be allowed to be imported, and what ought to be the amount of the bounty, in that particular caſe, to produce the deſired effect, and no more.

A free commerce of grain would prove ineffectual.

WERE all countries equally fertile, and was commerce free from reſtrictions in all the nations of Europe, nothing more would be neceſſary to inſure the beneficial effects required, but barely to leave the commerce of grain perfectly free from any reſtraints, and allow things to take their natural courſe. But, ſeeing

(*a*) THAT theſe effects have not been more ſeverely felt, muſt be attributed to ſome cauſes that will be explained in the ſequel.

ſeeing that ſome countries in Europe are ſo fertile as to be capable of producing grain at half the price for which it could be reared for in others, and ſince the commerce of every country is encumbered with ſome reſtraints either temporary or permanent, it behoves every conſiderate nation to endeavour to diſcover ſome more effectual remedy againſt the grievous ills above enumerated, than the ideal benefits that would accrue from an apparently free commerce of grain would produce. It was theſe conſiderations that determined the Britiſh legiſlature to adopt the idea of firſt granting a bounty on the exportation of grain; and the happy effects that have accrued from thence, ſufficiently envinces the wiſdom of that meaſure. But I muſt now deſcend to particulars.

PART SECOND.

Particular obſervations.

WITH reſpect to the commerce of oats and oat-meal in Scotland, (the only object of the propoſed law, and the only particulars intended to be narrowly enquired into in this tract), there can be no doubt that there are ſeveral countries in which theſe articles could be reared at a much ſmaller expence than in Scotland; ſo that if there was no law againſt the importation of oats, &c. at any time, into this country, oats, or oat-meal, could be brought from theſe countries, and ſold in our market cheaper than they could be afforded for by our own farmers; which would unavoidably diſcourage our agriculture, and bring us in time to be in ſome meaſure dependent on theſe foreign nations for our daily bread: the conſequences of which circumſtance have been already enumerated.

Oats and oat-meal can be raiſed cheaper in ſome other countries than in Scotland; therefore it is neceſſary to prohibit the importation of theſe till the price is above the medium rate they can be afforded for in Scotland.

FOR theſe reaſons, it is allowed, by moſt perſons who have reflected on this ſubject, that foreign oats, or oat-meal, ought not to be allowed to be imported and ſold in our markets, unleſs when the price riſes ſomewhat higher than it can be afforded ſo by our own farmers in ordinary years. If ſo, it will be neceſſary to aſcertain what is the price it can be afforded for by our farmers in ordinary years.

The medium price of oatmeal in Mid-Lothian found to be about 12s. or 12s. 6d. *per boll.*

THE only natural rule that I can think of applying, with a view to aſcertain this queſtion, is to look back and ſee at what price the kinds of grain in queſtion have been actually ſold for by our own farmers for a reaſonable number of years paſt. Upon theſe principles, on looking into the fiars of Mid-Lothian for

twenty

twenty years backwards, it appears, that the average price of the beſt oat-meal during that period, amounts to about thirteen ſhillings *per* boll, reckoning eight ſtone Scots troy a boll. From whence I think we may reaſonably infer, that oat-meal could not be reared for much leſs than that price, and that it might in general be afforded by our farmers at I ſuppoſe, about twelve and ſixpence or twelve ſhillings, *were the market-price ſteady* (*a*).

IT does not, however, follow that importation ought to be permitted, whenever the price ſhould exceed twelve ſhillings: for as this is the rate at which it can only be afforded by the farmer when he has a middling crop; if he ſhould not receive a higher price for his grain in a ſcanty ſeaſon, to make up for the deficiency in quantity, it is plain that he would, on theſe occaſions, be a conſiderable loſer, and therefore be unable to carry on his buſineſs properly. On this account, it is juſt and expedient to prevent foreign grain from coming in competition with him in the home-market, till the price ſhall riſe to ſuch a rate as to indemnify him for his deficiency in quantity.

The import-rate ought to be placed as much above the medium ſelling price, as the loweſt price in years of plenty is below that medium price.

IT has been computed, and I think with ſome degree of juſtice, that the greateſt variation between a ſcanty crop, and one of great plenty, may amount to a fourth part nearly of a medium crop. Suppoſing this calculation to be juſt, the farmer to be indemnified, ought to receive one eighth of the average price more for each boll of his grain in the greateſt ſcarcity, if he can ſell it in years of the greateſt plenty at not above one eighth of the ſame average price lower than the ſame medium price. At this rate, the ports ought to be ſhut againſt foreigners, until the price roſe at leaſt one ſhilling and ſixpence higher than the medium rate, that is, to thirteen ſhillings and ſixpence at leaſt, or fourteen ſhillings *per* boll; and the farmer ought at the ſame time to be ſecured againſt being ever under the neceſſity of ſelling his oat-meal at a lower rate than ten ſhillings and ſixpence, or eleven ſhillings *per* boll: for if he is in the one caſe under the neceſſity of ſelling at any time below that price, there will be an equal neceſſity of inſuring him a proportionally higher price in years of ſcarcity; and therefore that the ports ought not to be opened for importation till the price ſhould riſe to that higher rate.

Neceſſity of providing a market for the ſurplus produce in years of plenty, to prevent an exceſſive lowneſs of price.

FROM this view of the matter, it appears, that unleſs a market be opened for the farmer, to which he can carry his ſurplus produce

(*a*) THE reaſons for ſuppoſing the average might be lower, if the ſelling price was ſteady, will appear from the ſequel.

produce in years of plenty, without allowing the price ever to ſink immoderately low, there will be a neceſſity of ſuffering the price to riſe very high in years of ſcarcity. But as nothing can be ſo deſtructive to the intereſt of agriculture or manufactures, as great variations in the price of bread-corn, it ought to be the chief concern of a well informed legiſlature, to prevent, if poſſible, theſe variations of price. And as it is not poſſible to effect this, without providing a ſteady market for grain at a reaſonable price in years of great plenty, their chief efforts ought to be directed towards that object.

An enquiry where that market is to be found.

IT cannot be denied, that the home-market will never be abundantly ſupplied in ordinary years, or in thoſe in which the crop is ſcanty, unleſs much more is produced in favourable ſeaſons than is ſufficient to anſwer the home-demand abundantly. To prevent, therefore, the unreaſonable degradation of price that muſt neceſſarily enſue from this ſuperabundance, that ſurplus produce muſt be carried to ſome foreign market. But when we look around us to diſcover where that market for oats or oat-meal is to be found, the proſpect is extremely diſcouraging. Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, with their dependencies, are the only countries where theſe products are ever in requeſt; and theſe may be equally ſupplied from Poland as from hence (*a*). The price of theſe articles too, in theſe countries, is often ſo very low, as affords but ſmall proſpect of relief to our farmers, without the powerful ſupport of the legiſlature, by granting a very high bounty, when the circumſtances are ſuch as to make this neceſſary. That we may be able to aſcertain the amount of that bounty ſo as to make it prove effectual, and the variations that would be neceſſary to prevent it from being hurtful, we muſt here enter into ſome unavoidable details.

Norway, Denmark, or Sweden, the only market for oat-meal.

The price in theſe countries is ſometimes extremely low.

It is, in the *firſt* place, neceſſary to enquire, what is the loweſt price at which oats or oat-meal is ever ſold for in theſe markets, to which we muſt ſend our ſurplus produce in years of plenty. Upon enquiry, I have been aſſured by a ſenſible man, who reſided many years in Norway as a merchant, that the price of oat-meal there is frequently as low, as at the rate of eight ſhillings our boll; but that it is ſubject to conſiderable fluctuations of price in different ſeaſons; and the markets in Denmark and Sweden

(*a*) I do not mention Holland as a market; becauſe her commerce of oats, &c. is merely as an *entreport* between Poland and the northern countries.

den are nearly the ſame. Suppoſing then, that the amount of inſurance, commiſſion, merchants profits, freight, &c. in carrying oats or oat-meal to theſe markets, ſhould be one ſhilling and ſixpence *per* boll, it would follow, that in years of plenty the price muſt fall to ſix ſhillings ſixpence *per* boll in Scotland before we could ſell any of it in theſe markets. This is ſuppoſing no bounty to be granted.

Therefore they on theſe occaſions could afford no effectual relief to the farmer without the aid of a very high bounty.

BUT ſix ſhillings and ſixpence is a price ſo inadequately low as could afford no relief to our farmers. And if it be true that twelve ſhillings or twelve ſhillings and ſixpence is the medium price for which it can be afforded by our farmers; and if it be likewiſe true that the intereſt of the community would be moſt highly promoted by keeping the price of grain at all times as near to that medium ſtandard as poſſible, (which will not be denied by any thinking perſon), it will follow, that a bounty ought, in this caſe, to be granted ſo high as to raiſe the price ſufficiently in the home-market, while it permitted it to be ſold in the foreign market at that low rate. Let us, for example, ſuppoſe it were required to prevent the meal in our home-market from ever falling below eleven ſhillings *per* boll on the one hand, or of riſing above thirteen ſhillings on the other; it is plain, that when prices are as above ſtated, it would be neceſſary to grant a bounty of no leſs than four ſhillings and ſixpence *per* boll to produce the deſired effect.

This high bounty would only be neceſſary on particular occaſions.

A LITTLE reflection, however, will convince us, that there would be no neceſſity for granting the ſame bounty in other caſes, but that it would rather fruſtrate the deſign of granting it. Let us ſuppoſe, for example, that the price in the foreign market ſhould at ſome times be ten ſhillings inſtead of eight, it will appear, by a chain of reaſoning ſimilar to the foregoing, that if the ſame bounty of four ſhillings and ſixpence were then continued, inſtead of eleven ſhillings, the price in our home-market would be raiſed to thirteen ſhillings *per* boll. And if the price abroad ſhould be twelve ſhillings *per* boll, and the ſame bounty continued, the price at home muſt in this caſe be raiſed to fifteen ſhillings, unleſs ſome means were fallen upon to correct it. But as it never could be the aim of a wiſe legiſlature to expend the public treaſure, by granting bounties with a view to enhance the price of grain beyond its natural value in the home-market, it is not to be ſuppoſed that ever a law of this nature would be allowed to paſs, even if a bill for this purpoſe ſhould be preferred; as it is plain,

that

that all the beneficial purpoſes propoſed by the bounty, that of affording a ſteady market to the farmer, and of keeping the price of grain as free from variation as poſſible, would be effected by granting, in the two caſes above mentioned, the following bounties; viz. when the price abroad ſhould be ten ſhillings, a bounty of two ſhillings and ſixpence; and when the price was twelve ſhillings abroad, a bounty only of ſixpence *per* boll; as, in both theſe caſes, the price in the home-market would be kept ſteadily from falling below eleven ſhillings *per* boll.

Hence it appears that the rate of the bounty ought not on any occaſion to be fixed invariably.

BY this train of reaſoning we are led to draw a concluſion relating to the influence of bounties in general, that is of importance to be attended to, viz. that one invariable bounty, granted in all caſes wherein it can be at all claimed, will not ſo effectually anſwer the beneficial purpoſes for which bounties deſerve applauſe, as if the rate of that bounty ſhould be properly varied according to the neceſſity of the caſe. This doctrine has been illuſtrated in the foregoing paragraph; and the juſtneſs of it will be farther apparent from any other caſes that may be ſelected for that purpoſe. Let us ſuppoſe another caſe, and try it by the ſame teſt.

The bounty propoſed by the new law would on ſome occaſions be too ſmall, and on others too great, ſo that it would prove ineffectual for relieving the farmer.

It is propoſed by the law depending in parliament, that a bounty of two ſhillings and ſixpence ſhall be granted on the exportation of every boll of oats or oatmeal, while the price of the laſt in the home-market does not exceed fourteen ſhillings *per* boll. Now if this bill ſhould paſs into a law, it is plain, that when the price in foreign markets is ſo low as eight ſhillings *per* boll, the price in the home-market muſt fall as low as nine ſhillings, before our farmers can carry any of their grain to theſe markets. So that if the plenty of grain is produced in this country, which the ſupporters of this bill flatter themſelves will be the caſe, it muſt frequently happen that the price of oat-meal will ſink below that rate. On the other hand, when, from any accidental failure of crop abroad, the price ſhould riſe theſe to twelve ſhillings *per* boll, the price in our home-market would be raiſed to thirteen ſhillings; and ſo on of higher prices. By this means the bounty, while it affords no effectual relief to the farmer in plentiful years, will only tend to enhance the price at home, without any neceſſity or utility on other occaſions. I ſay without any *utility*, becauſe according to this ſuppoſition, the high price at home will not in many caſes be ſo much influenced by the deficiency of our own crops, as by

that

that of our neighbours; it may therefore happen that our farmers will on ſome occaſions receive a very high price for their grain when they have an abundant crop, and a much lower price for it at another time, though their crop ſhould be more ſcanty; by which means they would have an unreaſonable plenty at one time, and as unproportioned a ſcarcity at another; a circumſtance that could not fail to be attended with very baneful conſequences. Let any other rate of *fixed* bounty be propoſed, and the ſame conſequences will be found to reſult from it.

THERE is ſtill one other inconvenience that reſults from an invariable bounty, that deſerves to be taken notice of. As the quantity exported appears thus to depend rather on the price abroad than on the amount of our own crop, it muſt frequently happen, that, in conſequence of a ſudden demand from abroad, great quantities might be ſhipped off, even in a ſcanty ſeaſon, before that ſcarcity was perceived, ſo as to raiſe the price above the rate at which exportation is prohibited; and as the exporters, according to this ſyſtem, would be entitled to receive the full bounty, even when the price at home was but one halfpenny below the prohibited price, they would continue to export as faſt when it was at that rate, as at any other, if the price abroad was ſuch as to afford them a proſpect of profit. But in conſequence of that great exportation in a ſcanty year, it would come at length to be diſcovered, that there was not enough of grain left in the country for the ſupport of its inhabitants; the price of courſe muſt riſe till it ſhould come to the rate at which importation is permitted; and it might thus happen that the ſame grain, which in the beginning of the ſeaſon was exported, and a bounty paid for it, would in the end of the ſeaſon be reimported for our own uſe.

And would prove an unneceſſary drain from the public revenue.

THIS is an evil of which the Engliſh have often complained, although they have not hitherto been able to diſcover any better cure for the diſorder, than to enact temporary laws, by which exportation has been for a time prohibited when the danger became apparent. On many accounts, however, the Engliſh could not be ſubjected to ſuch inconveniencies from this cauſe as Scotland would be liable to. The market for wheat, the principal article of export from England, is much more ſteady than that for oat-meal from Scotland would be; on which account the bounty may with ſafety be placed lower, in proportion to its

This evil has been felt in England, but no remedy for it has been yet diſcovered.

value, than for meal, which will diminiſh the temptation. This alone, not to mention the ſmaller chance of getting the diſtreſs of the country ſo quickly known, ſo as to obtain a remedy, with ſome other inconveniencies not neceſſary to be here enumerated, ſhould make the legiſlators for Scotland extremely careful, if poſſible, to adopt ſome contrivance by which theſe evils may be obviated.

These evils might be removed by making the rate of the bounty depend at all times on the market-price of grain.

ALL theſe evils might be effectually obviated, with a conſiderable ſaving to the revenue, by the ſimple contrivance of granting, inſtead of a fixed bounty, one that ſhould vary always according to the exigency of the caſe; being higheſt when grain is cheap, and loweſt when dear. It would be an endleſs taſk to aſcertain the prices in foreign markets, and proportion the bounty to theſe prices, as in the foregoing examples: but that is not neceſſary. A much better rule would be, to make the rate of the bounty vary according to the ſelling price in our own market; for this price, it is plain, muſt firſt depend upon the abundance of our own crop, and next upon the market-price abroad. If our crop is no more than ſufficient to ſupply the home-demand, the price will not fall extremely low, however low the price abroad may be; but if there is more than can be conſumed at home, then, and not till then, the low price abroad will begin to be felt in our own markets. It is fit therefore that on theſe occaſions the bounty ſhould be ſuch as to force our corn into theſe markets, without too much raiſing the price at home. But if the bounty gradually encreaſes as the price decreaſes, and as gradually ſinks as the price riſes to a certain rate, exportation would always take place when it was neceſſary, and on no other occaſion. To illuſtrate this, let us endeavour to aſcertain what would ſeem to be a reaſonable bounty, and how it ought in equity to vary in proportion to the price.

An enquiry into the proportion that ought to obtain between the market-price of grain and the rate of bounty, ſo as to produce the deſired effect.

IT appears reaſonable, that no attempt ſhould be made to raiſe the price of grain higher than the medium rate. If ſo, it will follow, that when the price riſes to that medium rate, the bounty ought not to exceed the amount of the charges neceſſary to carry it to a foreign market. From theſe *data*, it will follow, that when oat-meal ſells for twelve ſhillings and ſixpence *per* boll, the bounty ſhould not exceed one ſhilling and ſixpence; as the firſt of theſe has been already fixed as the medium price, and the laſt the average charge of freight, &c. to a foreign market.

SUPPOSE alſo it ſhould be in general admitted, that exportation

tion ought to be entirely prohibited after the price at home roſe to fourteen ſhillings *per* boll; it is conſiſtent with reaſon, and would perfectly agree with the ſpirit of our corn-laws, to make the bounty gradually decreaſe as the price ſhould riſe, ſo as to fall to nothing at all before it reached the rate at which exportation ceaſes entirely.

ON theſe principles it would ſeem quite conſiſtent with equity and ſound policy, to make the bounty fall ſixpence for every ſixpence *per* boll that the price in the home-market ſhould riſe; at which rate the price and the bounty would vary as follows: viz. when the price is twelve ſhillings and ſixpence *per* boll, the bounty ſhould be one ſhilling and ſixpence,—when the price roſe above twelve ſhillings and ſixpence, and did not exceed thirteen ſhillings, the bounty ſhould fall to one ſhilling; when it roſe above thirteen ſhillings, and did not exceed thirteen ſhillings and ſixpence, the bounty ſhould be only ſixpence; and when it roſe to fourteen ſhillings, exportation to be entirely prohibited.

IF it be allowed that the rate of the bounty ought to decreaſe as the price riſes *above* the medium rate, it will be impoſſible to deny that it ought to riſe in proportion as the price ſinks below that medium rate, if we hope to preſerve the market-price of grain always very near the medium ſtandard price; which is the great object that ought never to be loſt ſight of in regulating the commerce of grain. This being granted, we are led to conclude, that the amount of the bounty granted on exportation, ought to be proportioned to the price, as in the following table:

Reſult of this enquiry with reſpect to oats and oat-meal in Scotland.

When oat-meal is at or above 14 s. *per* boll, exportation prohibited;
between 14 s. 6 d. and 13 s. exportation permitted without any bounty;
between 13 s. and 13 s. 6 d. a bounty of ſixpence *per* boll to be granted on exportation;
between 13 s. and 12 s. 6 d. a bounty of 1 s. *per* ditto;
between 12 s. 6 d. and 12 s. ditto of 1 s. 6 d. *per* ditto;
between 12 s. and 11 s. 6 d. ditto of 2 s. *per* ditto;
between 11 s. 6 d. and 11 s. ditto of 2 s. 6 d. *per* ditto;
between 11 s. and 10 s. 6 d. ditto of 3 s. *per* ditto;
between 10 s. 6 d. and 10 s. ditto of 3 s. 6 d. *per* ditto;
between 10 s. and 9 s. 6 d. ditto of 4 s. *per* ditto;
between 9 s. 6 d. and 9 s. ditto of 4 s. 6 d. *per* ditto;
and when at or under 9 s. ditto of 5 s. *per* boll. *(a)*

THE

(*a*) IT would be more equitable, and would more effectually inſure

Objection to the plan here propoſed for regulating the amount of the bounty in all caſes.

THE above is the beſt plan that at preſent occurs to me for regulating the bounty upon equitable principles, ſo as to make it prove at all times beneficial to every order of citizens, at a ſmall expence to the fiſk, without being partially favourable to any one; but I doubt much if it will meet with the approbation of any one order in the community. The air of novelty that it bears, will diſpleaſe ſome; the apparent extravagant rate of the bounty propoſed in ſome caſes, will frighten others; the care that is taken to guard againſt very low prices on any occaſion, will diſguſt a third party; and the equal attention that is beſtowed to prevent prices from ever riſing extravagantly high, will make the plan be contemptuouſly rejected by a fourth. But reaſon is for no party; and therefore will naturally be oppoſed by the partiſans of every ſide. Hoping therefore that theſe obſervations may come to be re-conſidered in ſome future period, when experience ſhall have in part confirmed or refuted the juſtneſs of the principles on which they are founded, rather than entertaining any ſanguine expectation of this influence at preſent, I calmly proceed to point out ſome of the benefits that would accrue from this ſyſtem of legiſlation, ſhould it ever be adopted.

Anſwer.

I WOULD wiſh to obviate all the above exceptions, becauſe I believe they may ſeverally occur to many individuals who are actuated by the beſt intentions. To thoſe who are ſtartled with the novelty of the propoſal, no other anſwer needs be given, but merely to beg that they will lay aſide their prejudices, and calmly conſider whether the propoſal is in itſelf reaſonable or not. Every improvement that the experience or ingenuity of man ſuggeſts on the practice of his forefathers has the ſame objection to encounter; yet no man will ſay that this ought to deter us from endeavouring to make ſtill greater improvements than are yet known. Among all the political innovations of modern times, none was more bold, or more contrary to the general ideas of ſuperficial obſervers, than the granting a bounty at all on the exportation of grain; as it apparently encourages a commerce that ſeems naturally calculated to enhance, inſtead of lowering

This plan would effectually remove a very material defect in the corn-laws which has never yet been obviated.

a ſteady market-price, to diminiſh the bounty ſtill more than in the above table when prices are high, and to make it ſtill higher when the prices are low; but this I dare not at preſent propoſe. The minds of mankind muſt be gradually prepared for it, before they could perceive the utility of ſuch a regulation in its full force.

lowering the price of grain. Yet the experience of near a century has now ſhown, that thoſe who reaſoned otherwiſe were right; and England enjoys the fruits of that liberal reaſoning. It is not, however, ſurpriſing that experience ſhould diſcover ſome defects in the mode of proportioning that bounty, which did not occur to the firſt propoſers of that law; but it would be not a little ſurpriſing if theſe improvements ſhould be now diſregarded, merely on account of their novelty.

THAT the propoſed amendment is entirely conſonant to the ſpirit of that law which originally granted a bounty on the exportation of corn, will not be denied by any attentive obſerver. The bounty was evidently intended to help our grain, to find a market in years of great plenty, without depreſſing the price to an unreaſonable degree: and although it may, on ſome extraordinary emergencies, according to the preſent mode of granting that bounty, be the cauſe of raiſing the price in our home-market higher than it otherwiſe would have been, this ariſes entirely from an overſight in our legiſlators, which ought to be corrected, and not from any defect in the inſtitution itſelf. It was evidently the intention of that law to prevent, as much as poſſible, prices from riſing very high in times of ſcarcity; with which view the bounty is not only withdrawn when prices are high, but exportation itſelf is entirely prohibited. But if it is not only reaſonable to withdraw the bounty, but is alſo neceſſary to prevent exportation entirely, when the prices riſe to a certain rate; ſurely it would be prudent to diminiſh the temptation to export grain before it came to that high price: and every perſon muſt be ſenſible of the abſurdity of granting to-day a very high bounty on exportation, although the grain is conſiderably above the medium price; and to-morrow, when the price has not riſen above a penny higher, that the liberty of exporting, and the power of demanding the bounty, ſhould both fall together. This ſurely could never have been ſo long permitted, had it not been overlooked

SHOULD it be ſaid, that when prices are high in the home-market, there will be little temptation to export to other countries, becauſe it is probable the prices may not be ſo high in theſe markets as to indemnify the merchant for the charge of tranſporting it to theſe foreign markets. I anſwer, that this may be ſometimes the caſe; but that the bounty prevents this in as far as its amount. But when there is a ſcarcity in foreign markets

markets at the ſame time that the ſcarcity is felt at home, it is evident the conſequences may be very prejudicial. An example will prove this undeniable.

SUPPOSE that, in conſequence of a general ſcarcity throughout Europe, the price of oat-meal ſhould be in the markets abroad at thirteen ſhillings *per* boll, and that Scotland ſhould have had ſuch a crop as was quite ſufficient to ſupply its whole inhabitants, and no more. At that rate, were no exportation to take place, the price would ſettle at twelve ſhillings and ſixpence, and not be affected by the foreign prices. But if a fixed bounty of two ſhillings and ſixpence *per* boll be granted in all caſes when the price did not amount to fourteen ſhillings *per* boll, merchants would then be tempted to export a great deal, as they would, in this caſe, be able to draw fourteen ſhillings *per* boll in a foreign market. In conſequence of this conſiderable exportation, the prices, after ſome time, would be raiſed at home to fourteen ſhillings; but towards the end of the ſeaſon, the deficiency occaſioned by the exportation in the beginning, would be felt, and then prices would riſe ſo high, as to pay for bringing it from foreign countries. Thus, inſtead of twelve ſhillings and ſixpence *per* boll, which it would have been at but for the high bounty and exportation occaſioned by it, the price might be raiſed perhaps to ſeventeen or eighteen ſhillings *per* boll. For the price at laſt would depend entirely on the rate it was ſelling for at the time in foreign markets.

BUT if the bounty had been regulated as in the table above, theſe inconveniencies could not have been felt almoſt at all. In conſequence of the very firſt demand for exportation, the price would have been raiſed above twelve ſhillings and ſixpence; at which rate, a bounty of one ſhilling *per* boll only could have been demanded: but with this bounty the merchant could only receive twelve ſhillings and ſixpence clear in the foreign market. And his profit being thus reduced to nothing, the exportation would of courſe be ſtopped, and we would enjoy plenty, with moderate prices, at home.

THE ſame truth might be exemplified, by aſſuming other prices at pleaſure, either higher or lower than this one here ſelected: from all of which the beneficial conſequences of this regulation would appear inconteſtibly evident: but as any reader of the moſt moderate capacity can compare the effects of a fixed bounty in every caſe, with that ſuggeſted in the above table,

I leave it as a praxis for himſelf, ſuppoſing that the general fact is ſufficiently demonſtrated by the above example.

It would prove a great ſaving to the revenue.

TO thoſe who are ſtartled by the apparent greatneſs of the bounty on ſome occaſions, and who may from thence infer, that it would become extremely burdenſome to the revenue; I would beg leave to ſuggeſt, that the high rate of bounty could only take place when the prices were extremely low: a thing that can but very ſeldom happen, and muſt be of ſhort continuance whenever it ſhould accidentally occur. For if a very moderate exportation were to take place on theſe occaſions, the price, in conſequence of that exportation, would gradually be raiſed, and with it would fall the rate of the bounty. Any one who beſtows but a very ſlight attention to the prices in Scotland for many years paſt, will eaſily ſatisfy himſelf, that, by the aid of a bounty nearly equal to what is here propoſed, it would not perhaps be once in twenty years ſo low, or at leaſt below ten ſhillings *per* boll; and I myſelf am ſo much convinced that this would be found to be the caſe in practice, that unleſs it had been for ſhewing the equity of the principles on which this table is conſtructed, I ſhould hardly have extended it below ten ſhillings. If then we have reaſon to ſuppoſe, that grain would ſeldom be below that price, it muſt follow, that the bounty, when at the very higheſt rate, would only be one ſhilling higher than that which is propoſed, *in all caſes*, by the preſent bill. So far, therefore, would this plan be from ſquandering the public revenue, that I think one of its principal advantages would be that of ſaving a great deal of money that would be unneceſſarily expended by the propoſed law. For as there would be, according to that bill, an equal temptation to export grain when at thirteen ſhillings and tenpence as when at ten ſhillings, it might be concluded, that exportation would equally take place at all theſe prices; although it might often happen, that it would be neceſſary to ſupply the deficiency occaſioned by an over-exportation, by a ſubſequent re-importation. But as there could be no temptation by this plan for puſhing exportation too far when prices are high, we muſt conclude, that more would be exported by the ſcheme propoſed in the new Corn-bill, than by the other. And as the bounty on every boll, in the firſt caſe, would be two ſhillings and ſixpence, and the average bounty, in the other caſe, would not be much more than one ſhilling and ſixpence, there is the greateſt reaſon to believe, that not one half of the revenue would

would be expended in putting this plan in execution, that would be required annually, if the propoſed bill ſhould paſs into a law (*a*).

It would effectually prevent the price of grain from ever falling unreaſonably low.

IN anſwer to the next objection, that, by this regulation, prices would never be ſo low as they have ſometimes been known on former occaſions (*b*). The fact is acknowledged, and it is believed, that every impartial perſon will admit, that many would be the benefits that would reſult from hence to the community. I do not think myſelf a foe to humanity; yet I am ſo ſenſible of the

(*a*) But if the bounty ſhould to ſome appear ſtill too high by this ſcheme, it might be made a little lower, without any other diſadvantage accruing from it, ſave only that the prices in our home-market would be ſubject to greater variations, merely by making the bounty riſe ſixpence for every eightpence of fall in the price of meal; at which rate, the proportional bounty would be as under.

WHEN the price was from fourteen ſhillings to thirteen ſhillings and fourpence, exportation to be permitted without bounty.

from 13 s. 4 d. to 12 s. 8 d.	a bounty of 6 d. *per* boll to be allowed.
from 12 s. 8 d. to 12 s.	ditto of 1 s. *per* ditto.
from 12 s. to 11 s. 4 d.	1 s. 6 d. *per* ditto.
from 11 s. 4 d. to 10 s. 8 d.	2 s. *per* ditto
from 10 s. 8 d. to 10 s.	2 s. 6 d. *per* ditto.
from 10 s. to 9 s. 4 d.	3 s. *per* ditto.
from 9 s. 4 d. to 8 s. 8 d.	3 s. 6 d. *per* ditto.
from 8 s. 8 d. to 8 s.	4 s. *per* ditto.
from 8 s. to all lower prices.	4 s. 6 d. *per* ditto.

THIS alteration might be agreed to, not as an amendment, but the reverſe. It might, however, be adopted *rather than loſe the amendment* altogether. One ſtep towards improvement is always ſomething gained; others in time would follow.

(*b*) THE author of, *Thoughts reſpecting the propoſed Corn-bill*, &c. 4to, Edinburgh, 1777, imagines that many benefits would accrue to Scotland, if the price of oat-meal ſhould be always at, or below ten ſhillings *per* boll. He ſeems alſo to think, that the price of grain is a thing merely arbitrary, that may be permanently raiſed or depreſſed in any country, almoſt at pleaſure: but, happily for mankind, this is a matter of much greater difficulty than he ſeems to apprehend.

THERE are, no doubt, ſome fertile ſpots in Scotland, in which, *if the rents were properly diminiſhed*, oats might be reared at ten ſhillings *per* boll. But all the grain that theſe ſpots could produce, would

the many inconveniencies that reſult from an unreaſonable lowneſs of price, that I know of nothing that is more pernicious to ſociety, or that ought to be guarded againſt with greater care, unleſs it be an inordinate highneſs of price, which is equally provided againſt in the propoſed plan.

I AM afraid that the laſt objection, though not the moſt difficult to refute, will be the moſt difficult to overcome. High prices are ſo agreeable in idea, to thoſe who would pocket the money, if it could be obtained, that the moſt ſophiſtical argument, when it ſeems to point that way, aſſumes the maſk of Reaſon herſelf; and reaſons, when they have an oppoſite tendency, although ſupported by the certainty of demonſtration, are too apt to be diſregarded as dull and ſtupid, or ſtigmatized as petulant and impertinent.

ALTHOUGH it ſhould be poſſible to keep the prices at all times very high, it would admit of a doubt how far it would be beneficial, even to men of landed property, to have it ſo; but if I ſhall be able to ſhow, that the propoſed bill, even if allowed to paſs in the form its warmeſt advocates wiſh for, would not keep the prices *in general* ſo high as by the plan here propoſed, it will be unneceſſary to enter into that diſcuſſion.

It would as effectually prevent it from ever becoming intolerably high;

AT whatever rate the importation-price be fixed, it has been ſhown, would be far from being ſufficient to ſuſtain the whole of the inhabitants of Scotland; and as the greateſt part of the oats that ſuſtain our inhabitants at preſent, are reared upon ſoils that could not admit of being cultivated, unleſs the price of oats be rather above the medium price than below it, ſhould the price be reduced to ten ſhillings *per* boll, there would be a neceſſity of abandoning all theſe barren ſoils by the plough, and our inhabitants would then be reduced to the neceſſity of depending on foreign nations for their breadcorn: the conſequences of which have been already enumerated.

and would thus prevent the great variations of price that muſt naturally be expected if the propoſed bill ſhould paſs into a law.

HE thinks, that by thus lowering the price of oats, greater encouragement would be given for rearing wheat. But the ſuperior profit that ariſes from a crop of wheat, when compared with a crop of oats, upon a good ſoil, is already ſo great, as to be a ſufficient temptation for rearing as much wheat as is poſſible, on ſoils that are proper for producing that kind of grain. He is not perhaps aware, that on mooriſh, rude ſoils, upon which tolerable crops of oats could be reared, by good management, at a moderate expence, it often happens that it would require an expence equal to what might be ſufficient to purchaſe the ſoil in perpetuity, to bring it to a ſtate capable of rearing abundant crops of wheat.

ſhown, that the price in the home-market can never be influenced by it, *when our own produce is ſufficient to maintain all our inhabitants*; and if, in conſequence of the high encouragement given in years of ſcarcity, much more corn ſhould be produced than was ſufficient for that purpoſe, it will be the price in foreign markets that will regulate the home-price, and not the importation-rate. The author of *an Eſſay on the Corn-laws*, argues with the greateſt keenneſs for raiſing the price of oat-meal in Scotland, which he thinks will be fully effected by fixing the importation-rate at ſixteen ſhillings *per* boll. In conſequence of this high price, he argues, that agriculture would be encouraged, and more and more of our barren waſtes be improved. He is very right in attributing theſe effects to the riſe of price, ſuppoſing it ſhould take place; but he has forgot to tell us who is to pay that price. If Scotland at preſent produces as much grain as is ſufficient to maintain all its inhabitants in an ordinary year, it follows, that it would *then* produce more than was neceſſary for that purpoſe: the home-market will therefore be more abundantly ſupplied than at preſent; which is not the way to raiſe the price here. And if oat-meal be in general higher in Scotland than in many other parts of Europe, it is not to be ſuppoſed that the inhabitants of theſe countries will agree to give that high price for it. Who then is to take this extraordinary quantity of grain off the farmer's hands at the exorbitant rate he propoſes? it is plain that no one will agree to take it, unleſs ſuch a high bounty is granted as to force it to a foreign market at their own price, while the farmer in Scotland receives the high price propoſed to be given him. But as it has been already ſhewn, that if the bounty propoſed, viz. two ſhillings and ſixpence *per* boll were granted, it might frequently happen that our farmers would be obliged to ſell their grain at nine ſhillings *per* boll; it follows, that the propoſed bill would not be effectual for enſuring the high prices that are expected from it. And as, by the ſcheme here propoſed, a bounty of five ſhillings is allowed if ever the price ſhould fall ſo low as nine ſhillings, it follows, that the prices would be more effectually kept up by this ſcheme than by the propoſed bill.

By the plan propoſed in the new bill, oat-meal could not be kept ſteadily as high as fourteen ſhillings *per* boll, without the aid of a bounty of ſeven ſhillings and ſixpence at leaſt.

IF thoſe who expect to derive great advantages from the propoſed bill, in the way of raiſing the price of oats and oat-meal, argued conſiſtently, they ought therefore to inſiſt for a much higher

higher bounty than that which is therein propoſed; becauſe without this aid the high importation-rate, *ſuppoſing it could be effectually adhered to*, would be of no avail. There is no doubt, however, that if importation could be effectually prohibited till oat-meal roſe to ſixteen ſhillings *per* boll, and if an adequate bounty were granted, the price might be effectually raiſed to the rate propoſed. But what would be the amount of that bounty? From the *data* already given, it will be found, that the bounty, to keep our oat-meal conſtantly as high as fourteen ſhillings, could not be leſs than ſeven ſhillings and ſixpence *per* boll (*a*). A rate that no ſober man would ſeriouſly propoſe; eſpecially when it is conſidered, that this extravagant bounty could only be granted with a view to benefit one ſmall part of the community, at the expence, and to the ruin of all the reſt.

As it would be vain to propoſe to rear oats in Scotland, merely with a commercial view, the bounty ſhould only be adopted to preſerve ourſelves from dearth.

THE rearing of corn is no doubt a manufacture from which profit, in a commercial view, may be drawn, in proper circumſtances, in the ſame manner as for any other manufacture. But as it would be vain to hope for making any nation thrive by encouraging a manufacture for which there is not a general demand, and which muſt at all times be ſold below prime coſt; and as it is plain that this muſt always be the caſe with regard to the commerce of oats or oat-meal from Scotland, nothing could be more abſurd than an attempt to encourage that manufacture, *merely in a commercial view*. It is *for our preſervation alone*, and for providing a reaſonable ſecurity againſt want, or exorbitant prices of the neceſſaries of life, that we can, conſiſtent with the dictates of prudence, give ſuch high encouragement to that manufacture, as all ranks of perſons at preſent are willing to admit is reaſonable. All, therefore, that ſhould, in our circumſtances, be attempted, is to ſecure to the farmer a reaſonable price, and ſteady demand for his produce, that he may be encouraged always to rear abundance to ſupply the home-

(*a*) This is upon the ſuppoſition, that the price in foreign markets ſhould never be below eight ſhillings *per* boll. But, even in the preſent ſituation of affairs, the price is often below that rate; and if Britain ſhould force their grain in great quantities into theſe markets, they would be ſo overſtocked by it, that the prices would of neceſſity fall very much below that rate; ſo that a ſtill higher bounty would become neceſſary. In that caſe, it is probable that a bounty of ten ſhillings *per* boll, at leaſt, would be neceſſary to produce the deſired effect.

home-demand ſufficiently, in the ſcantieſt ſeaſons. To do more would be manifeſtly hurtful, inſtead of beneficial to the ſtate.

In the preſent ſtate of Scotland, the price of grain could not be materially raiſed, even if the import-rate ſhould be fixed at ſixteen guineas *per* boll.

IT does not appear to me that thoſe who favour the new Corn-bill, in the hopes that it will be the means of raiſing the price of oat-meal, &c. have examined the operation of the propoſed law with any degree of attention. The rate of the bounty, which could only effectually anſwer their purpoſe, is ſo much neglected as hardly to be mentioned in any of their pamphlets; and they ſeem to rely on the importation-rate alone (*a*). It ſeems

(*a*) THE author of, *An Eſſay on the Corn-laws*, 8vo, Edinburgh, 1777, ſeems to be one of the moſt ſanguine advocates for this riſe of price. Arguing on that head, he obſerves: "If it be reaſonable, "when the riches of a country are greatly encreaſed, that the proprietors of land ſhould participate the effects thereof, as well as other "citizens, (and it does not occur how this can be denied), it follows "neceſſarily, that the prices of grain ought not to be always the "ſame. If this was to be the caſe, the landed men would have reaſon to grieve, in place of rejoicing, at the proſperity of their country; they would be no better than mere beaſts of burden to the trading and manufacturing parts of this kingdom; the more the latter "flouriſhed, the more hard would be the condition of the former. Whilſt "the prices of other things encreaſed, in proportion to the riches of the "country, grain, the commodity, or manufacture, or what you pleaſe "to call it, by which they live, would always continue the ſame; "and thus theſe gentlemen, amidſt the greateſt proſperity of their "fellow-citizens, would every day be becoming more poor, becauſe, "whilſt their income continued the ſame, they would have higher "wages to pay their ſervants, and higher prices to give for all the "commodities they wanted."

THIS author ſeems here to forget, that although the riches of England has been much encreaſed within the laſt hundred years; and although the price of grain has even *decreaſed* within that period, we do not meet with any complaints of a decline in the revenue of men of landed property: his argument, therefore, is contradicted by experience. The truth is, if farmers meet with proper markets, and due encouragement in other reſpects, they will be able to pay advanced rents, although they receive no greater price for each boll of their grain than formerly. And if the farmers *can* pay an advanced rent, there is no danger that the landed gentlemen will not obtain it.

IN arguing for a riſe of the importation-rate of oat-meal in Scotland,

ſeems ſurpriſing, that thoſe who think this a matter of ſo much importance ſhould not have adverted, that, in the preſent ſituation of Britain as to the other corn-laws, if the importation-rate had been fixed at ſixteen guineas inſtead of ſixteen ſhillings, it

land, the ſame author is alſo unlucky; as the example of England directly contradicts his reaſoning. The importation-rate in England for wheat was originally placed very high, in compliance with prejudices then generally entertained of the ſame kind with thoſe at preſent current in Scotland. But experience ſhowed the futility of this reaſoning; and the importation-rate has been lowered from four pounds to forty-eight ſhillings *per* quarter: nor do we find that the ſmalleſt inconvenience has been felt from that alteration.

IN another part of his eſſay, the ſame author, ſuppoſing the price of oat-meal would be raiſed in conſequence of the high importation-rate contended for, is at the pains to enter into a compariſon of oat-meal and wheat-flour, with a view to ſhow, that the poor in Scotland could live cheaper if the oat-meal ſhould be at ſixteen ſhillings *per* boll, than thoſe of England could do at the ordinary price of their wheat. In this compariſon he proceeds upon the ſuppoſition, that all the people in England eat only wheat-bread. But it appears from facts produced by the well-informed author of the Corn-tracts, publiſhed many years ago, that in many countries of England the people live as much upon oat-meal as they do in general in Scotland; and it is well known by every one who has been in England, and has attended to that matter, that in very few places do the ordinary people live entirely on wheat-flour, rye-bread being very common in many other counties: ſo that were the matter in point, his arguments would not be admitted as fairly deduced.

IT deſerves likewiſe to be obſerved, that there is a natural difference between the value of oat-meal and wheat-flour, that no political regulation could ever entirely remove, where they can both be obtained. In the *firſt* place, flour is univerſally prized as moſt delicate and palatable, and therefore it will always fetch a greater price in any free market than oat-meal: and in the *next* place, wheat, in moſt places, but eſpecially in a barren country, cannot be reared at an expence nearly ſo ſmall as oats may be reared for. An attempt therefore to bring the one to a permanent price nearly equal to that of the other, muſt always prove abortive, as contrary to the eſtabliſhed order of things. If therefore the people, in ſome counties in England, do in general eat wheat-bread, it is becauſe they are in general ſo rich as to be able to afford to purchaſe it; and

thoſe

it could have operated very little in raiſing the price of oat-meal in Scotland; for as the intercourſe between Scotland and England is entirely free with regard to the commerce of grain, and as oats may be imported into England when the price amounts to ſixteen ſhillings *per* quarter, about eleven ſhillings our boll, and oat-meal apparently at all times, without any limitation of price; is it not plain, that if ever the market-price in Scotland ſhould riſe a little above ſixteen ſhillings *per* quarter, we could be abundantly ſupplied through England, although we could not import any grain directly from any other place?

It is therefore fooliſh to expreſs ſo much anxiety about the import-rate, as the writers for and againſt the bill have done.

FROM theſe conſiderations, I cannot help thinking, that all the writers for and againſt this bill have ſhewed an inordinate zeal for a circumſtance, that, according to the light in which they ſeem to view it, could be, in the preſent ſtate of this country, of very trifling importance. And were it not from other conſiderations, that it is perhaps unneceſſary here to explain, I would think it a matter of no earthly concern, whether the Glaſgow merchants were to be indulged in their favourite importation-rate of thirteen ſhillings and fourpence; or whether the other party were to get it fixed at ſixteen ſhillings *per* boll. But as the prices can never be very materially affected by the importation-rate, although fixed very high; and as, in the preſent ſituation of Scotland, if the prices were fixed very low, it might give riſe to a very deſtructive kind of corn-trade in ſome caſes, eſpecially if an invariable bounty at all exportation-prices were granted, it would ſeem to be ſafer to keep it pretty high, rather than to make it too low; although, in compliance with the prejudices of the vulgar, it might perhaps be placed a little lower than was originally propoſed in the bill: but, in tenderneſs to the manufacturing

thoſe who are in indigent circumſtances, if they cannot afford to purchaſe wheat-bread, may have recourſe to the cheaper and more deſpiſed, though equally nouriſhing and wholeſome, meal of oats. But if oat-meal were in Scotland at ſixteen ſhillings *per* boll, while the ſame meal in England was at eleven ſhillings, the perſons in indigent circumſtances in the one country would ſuffer much greater hardſhips than in the other, whatever might be the ſelling price of wheat at the time. As I am ſenſible that this argument is rather foreign from the ſubject of this Eſſay, I ſhall not purſue it farther.

manufacturing parts of the nation, it ought to be but very little lower than that *(a)*.

ALTHOUGH I have ventured to diſſent from the favourers of the new Corn-bill in ſome particulars, yet I am ſatisfied it would in the main be an amendment of our preſent corn-laws; and, in ſome reſpects, the improvement would be ſo great, as to deſerve a very high degree of applauſe. Of this kind I conſider the alteration it propoſes, in the mode of regulating the importation or exportation of oats and oat-meal, by the price of oat-meal, inſtead of oats in ſubſtance. Nothing could be more judicious than this alteration; becauſe, inſtead of making that important commerce depend upon a ſtandard that is ſo difficult to aſcertain, as oats muſt always be, on account of the great variations in the quality of different parcels that paſs under the ſame denomination, it ſubſtitutes a ſtandard, the quality of which is very little ſubject to variation, whoſe price may be aſcertained with much greater eaſe and certainty, and which of courſe gives leſs room for frauds and abuſe, by intereſted individuals.

The ſubſtituting oat-meal inſtead of oats, for regulating the prices, a judicious improvement.

I AM likewiſe ſatisfied, that no material inconvenience could ariſe from making the price of oat-meal in Mid-Lothian be conſidered as a general ſtandard for all Scotland: for although a trifling inconvenience might ſometimes be felt from a ſmall difference between the market-price at Edinburgh, and at ſome other parts of Scotland; yet this would be far more than counterbalanced, by its preventing thoſe frauds in aſcertaining the price in different places, which are next to unavoidable, as the law at preſent ſtands with reſpect to that article *(b)*.

It is alſo proper to make the prices in Mid-Lothian be a ſtandard for all Scotland.

I WOULD, however, object to the mode of aſcertaining the price of oat-meal, eſpecially in Mid-Lothian, propoſed in the preſent

Objections to the mode of aſcertaining the price of oat-meal propoſed in the bill.

(a) I have juſt now learned, that the gentlemen of Mid-Lothian have agreed to recommend fourteen ſhillings and eightpence as a proper rate for permitting importation. As this is perfectly conſiſtent with the idea above expreſſed, it will be believed, that I approve of it as a juſt one. Indeed if we were perfectly unconnected with England in the preſent caſe, I think it would be a very equitable price.

(b) A GENTLEMAN of my acquaintance propoſed a method for aſcertaining the prices in Scotland upon a plan extremely equitable, to which I would have no objection, ſave that in this caſe it is hardly neceſſary to be at ſo much trouble to aſcertain a circumſtance that

may

preſent bill, for the following reaſons: *Firſt*, Becauſe it throws upon the judges in the Court of Seſſion and Exchequer, a piece of buſineſs that does not properly belong to them, which they will look upon as the more burdenſome, as they muſt be ſenſible it is quite unneceſſary; and *ſecondly*, Becauſe it excludes all perſons from being examined as evidence, in aſcertaining theſe prices, except gentlemen of great landed property. As the multitude are apt to imagine, that this is purpoſely ſo ordered, with a view always to keep up the prices at the higheſt rate poſſible, it tends to augment thoſe jealouſies that ſo much prevail between the gentlemen and the commonalty in Scotland: it were better therefore to avoid giving the moſt diſtant occaſion of offence to theſe weak minds, by throwing it into another channel, as it could only be attended with trouble, without profit, to the gentlemen of Mid-Lothian *(a)*.

Another mode of doing this propoſed, by which all theſe objections would be obviated.

THESE inconveniencies might be avoided, and the deſign of the law effectually accompliſhed, by ſimply empowering the Lords of Seſſion to nominate a perſon, whom they ſhall think properly qualified, for inſpecting the prices of meal in the market of Edinburgh at all times. To this office might be annexed a ſmall ſalary, not under five, nor above ten pounds *per annum*, payable out of the Exchequer, or any other fund that ſhould be thought more expedient; the perſon to hold it during the pleaſure

may be eaſier done in another way, with ſufficient accuracy for the purpoſe required. His plan was this.

LET five or ſix counties in Scotland, in which grain uſually ſells at the moſt different prices, be ſelected for this purpoſe. In each of theſe counties let the prices of grain be aſcertained times every year, in the ſame manner as the fiars are ſtruck at preſent. Let each of theſe prices be tranſmitted regularly to the Court of Seſſion at the ſame time; and when theſe prices were before them, let the Court ſtrike the average, and publiſh that as the price for regulating the prices with regard to importation or exportation, through all Scotland for the time.

(a) This would be attended with much more trouble to the gentlemen of Mid-Lothian than they ſeem to apprehend. The number of gentlemen in that county, poſſeſſed of the landed revenue required in the bill, is not very conſiderable. And were two or more of theſe to be obliged to attend on this buſineſs once a-month, it would ſoon go round the whole, and they would be harraſſed attending theſe unintereſting trials.

ſure of the Court, and to be at all times ſubjected to their inſpection and controul. This perſon ſhould have it in charge to attend the public meal-market of Edinburgh every market-day, and there enquire into the general ſelling price of good oat-meal that day; a true account of which he ſhould deliver regularly in writing, upon oath, on the evening of that day, to one of the principal clerks of ſeſſion, or ſome other perſon properly authoriſed by the Court to receive the ſame, with a note of that price, ſubſcribed by his own hand, which ſhould be duly entered in a regiſter, to be kept for that purpoſe, and publiſhed that evening, if poſſible, in any one of the Edinburgh public news-papers that the judges ſhould nominate for that purpoſe: this to be done regularly once a-week continually. This price, ſo publiſhed by authority, to be accounted the legal price of oat-meal for the time, through all Scotland, in every thing that relates to the bounty or importation of oats, or the produce of oats for one week, reckoning from the morning of the day after the day of publication of that news-paper in Edinburgh, and from the morning after the uſual day of the arrival of the poſt that brings that news-paper, at every other ſea-port town in Scotland reſpectively. From that period, till the ſame time next week, let all oat-meal, or oats, &c. actually ſhipped on board of any veſſel, be entitled to ſuch bounty as effiers to the price of that day; and all oats, or the produce of oats, that ſhall be actually landed in that time, be entirely regulated by the price of that day, without any retroſpect to the paſt, or reference to the future prices.

Advantages attending the mode here propoſed for aſcertaining the price of oat-meal,

NOTHING could be more ſimple than this mode of aſcertaining the price of this kind of grain, more eaſy in the execution, more certain in its operation, and leſs liable to any manner of abuſe than this would be. The price of oat-meal in a public market can always be known with a greater degree of certainty than that of any other kind of grain; as there is ſo little variation between different parcels of the ſame kind, that every one is in a manner obliged to ſell at the ſame price with another. And if the perſon in office ſhould either be partial or negligent in the diſcharge of his duty, the error would be immediately diſcovered: a petition could be preferred to the judges, and a proof led before them on the ſpot, within the ſpace of a few hours after the error

was committed; ſo that he could not be permitted to hurt the community, either through negligence or fraud.

The rate of the bounty ought always to be regulated by the price of grain at the time the bounty is claimed.

It is likewiſe more equitable, that the ſelling price, *at the time*, ſhould always regulate the bounty, than that of any former or diſtant period. And it was probably from a conviction of this that the ſtatute 14th G. III. cap. was enacted, that the ſelling price of the reſpectable kinds of grain, at the market next to the place where thoſe kinds of grain are intended to be ſhipped or landed, on the market-day immediately preceding the time at which ſuch kinds of grain, &c. is to be ſhipped or landed, ſhall determine whether importation or exportation may take place, or bounties be legally demanded. By this law, however, a door was opened for manifold frauds and abuſes, which would be effectually avoided by the regulation here mentioned, while every benefit that could be propoſed by that law would be as effectually ſecured.

Objection removed.

It has been objected, that by this method of aſcertaining the price at which importation, &c. ſhould be permitted, merchants would, in times of ſcarcity, be diſcouraged from commiſſioning grain from other countries, as it would be impoſſible for them to foreſee whether the ports would be open for its reception, or ſhut when it would arrive. But if our reaſoning in the former parts of this Eſſay is well-founded, there will ſeldom or never be occaſion to import oat-meal or oats into Scotland: and if it ſhould, on extraordinary emergencies, become neceſſary, the liberty of ſtoring it on ſhore under the joint key of the cuſtom-houſe officer and proprietor, which the law at preſent permits, would remove every juſt ground of complaint on this head (*a*).

ALL

(*a*) I PERCEIVE that the minds of the people in Scotland at preſent are in general ſo ſtrongly prepoſſeſſed with an idea of the neceſſity of frequently importing oats or oat-meal into this country, that I foreſee great objections to the amendment propoſed in the text. And I am afraid that I ſhall find great difficulty in perſuading many of them, that the ſhort interval here propoſed between the different periods of aſcertaining the prices, could not poſſibly be attended with any inconvenience to the inhabitants in general.

BUT every one muſt be ſenſible that no poſſible inconvenience could ariſe from this regulation, unleſs when it became neceſſary to import grain from other countries: and it can hardly admit of a doubt, that

ALL that is ſaid above, the reader will perceive, relates only to the aſcertaining the price of oat-meal and oats: as I conſider the commerce of this kind of grain as the only one in which Scotland is materially intereſted; ſo that if it ſhall be put under proper

Method of aſcertaining the price of of wheat and other kinds of grain, excepting oat-meal.

that, in conſequence of the bounty propoſed, much more grain would be raiſed in Scotland than formerly, and the neceſſity of importing any at all would probably be entirely removed. It is well known, that between the years 1707 and 1741, no oat-meal or grain could by law be imported into Scotland; and as grain for all that time, ſave only the laſt year, was very reaſonable, it appears, that, even at that time, the grain produced was very nearly enough to ſupply ourſelves; and if it be conſidered that our agriculture is already much improved ſince that time, and that it would ſtill improve conſiderably by the propoſed encouragement, there ſeems to be no room to doubt but we would ſoon raiſe enough for our own ſuſtenance; eſpecially if we conſider the great help we derive from potatoes, which have been introduced into Scotland ſince that period.

BUT if this argument ſhould not appear ſo ſatisfactory to ſome others as it does to me, and if they ſhould ſtill be perſuaded that on ſome occaſions we might be obliged to rely on foreign aid; I would ſay, that even in this caſe the inconvenience could not be ſeverely felt. Not to mention the facility with which we might at all times be ſupplied from England, if ever the ſcarcity ſhould become real, it would appear evident to every conſiderate merchant, that the high price would become ſteady, and be little apt to vary from time to time. If the matter was doubtful, and if the importation-rate were not fixed very high, (which on this account chiefly, if I ever apprehend ſcarcity, I would think neceſſary), no capital inconvenience could ariſe if merchants waited till the price fixed ſteadily above the importation rate, before they gave commiſſions for any to be brought from abroad.

THE above is the only poſſible inconvenience that could reſult from this regulation; and this, at worſt, is but a mere *poſſibility*, and of no capital importance; but the benefits that would reſult from it are many and real. It is a general defect of our laws, that they are ſo troubleſome to execute, and thoſe who are inſtructed with the executing them are ſo little intereſted in the matter, that they are allowed to fall into diſuſe almoſt as ſoon as they are enacted; they are beſides ſo imperfectly promulgated, that perſons intereſted in them have no eaſy method of knowing them exactly; which helps likewiſe to cauſe them be very ſoon neglected. Both of theſe inconveniencies

proper regulations, the manner in which the price of the others ſhall be aſcertained is a matter of much leſs importance. To make this, however, as little burdenſome as poſſible, and at the ſame time ſufficiently accurate, one of two methods might be adopted, I believe with almoſt equal propriety. The firſt is to authoriſe and require the ſheriff of Edinburgh to call before him four times in the year, (as by the 13th of his preſent Majeſty is required), a ſufficient number of ſubſtantial diſintereſted perſons, who ſhall aſcertain the current prices of wheat, flour, rye, barley, malt, and peaſe, &c. in the ſame manner as the fiars are annually ſtruck; and this determination, duly intimated, ſhall aſcertain the prices of theſe reſpective kinds of grain for the enſuing quarter, in as far as relates to importation or exportation. This would make Mid-Lothian be the ſtandard for all Scotland.

BUT if it ſhould appear more equitable in the eyes of others to have the real average price of all the counties of Scotland as this ſtandard; let the ſheriffs of each county be authoriſed to aſcertain the prices, each in his own diſtrict, at the times above ſpecified,

would be effectually removed in the preſent caſe. The execution would be ſo eaſy, and the intelligence ſo univerſal, that it would inſure a certain and general attention among all ranks of people to that law at all times.

IT is likewiſe much to be wiſhed, that every law, on which the welfare of millions immediately depends, ſhould be at the ſame time conſtant in its operation, little liable to be eſſentially deranged by any accidental circumſtances, and to afford frequent opportunities of correcting any error before it had time to become pernicious. All theſe benefits likewiſe would accrue from this inſtitution. The bounty would be continually regulated by the actual ſelling price at the time, and not be for a long while influenced, by a rate which had perhaps varied much before there was an opportunity of correcting it.

OTHER advantages might be enumerated; but the note is already too long. If, however, thoſe who are to judge in this matter ſhould be ſtill diſſatisfied with the ſhortneſs of time, inſtead of every week, the average prices every month could be taken. But as the lengthening the time between each period for aſcertaining the prices can only prove beneficial to corn-merchants, although hurtful to every other perſon, I would ſtrongly recommend, that the interval between each ſhould be as ſhort as poſſible; and that therefore the weekly method ſhould be adhered to.

ſpecified, and immediately thereafter tranſmit the ſame to the Lords of Seſſion, who ſhould be authoriſed and required to compare theſe prices with one another, and to ſtrike a general average for each kind of grain reſpectively; which average price, duly publiſhed, ſhould be accounted the ſtandard price for three months, in every queſtion relating to the exportation or importation of theſe kinds of grain. This amendment is calculated merely to ſave trouble to the judges of the court of ſeſſion and exchequer: but if they themſelves ſhould approve of the plan propoſed by the preſent bill for aſcertaining the price of the above kinds of grain, it is certain that no inconvenience could reſult from thence; and therefore it is probable that no other perſon would object to it.

Judicious improvement on the corn-laws propoſed by the gentlemen of Banff-ſhire.

IT is with great pleaſure that I would adopt any uſeful hints that have been ſuggeſted by others who have reflected on this ſubject: *Plus oculus quam oculi vident.* The following hints, ſuggeſted by the gentlemen of Banff-ſhire, who ſeem to have attended to this ſubject with great impartiality and candour, are of ſuch importance, as to deſerve to be carefully attended to. There are part of a liſt of reſolutions agreed to by the gentlemen of that county, which were publiſhed in the Aberdeen's Journal, November 10th.

The old laws againſt ingroſſers ſhould be aboliſhed:

" THEY (the gentlemen above mentioned) are of opinion, " that the internal corn-trade, that is, the tranſporting of corn " from one part of the kingdom to another, ſhould be made as " free and open as poſſible; and for this purpoſe all penalties " and reſtrictions upon thoſe deſcribed in the old laws, under " the name of ingroſſers, ought to be removed."

as alſo bonding at cuſtom-houſes for tranſporting grain coaſtways

" THAT bonding at cuſtom-houſes, and paying fees for " coaſt-cockets, for tranſporting grain from one part of the " kingdom to another, ought alſo to be removed."

Additional reaſons for annulling theſe cuſtom-houſe bonds.

The laſt-named grievance, if not removed on the preſent occaſion, will become more intolerable than formerly, eſpecially to the inhabitants of the weſt coaſt of Scotland, who will now, by means of the new canal, be more eaſily ſupplied from the eaſt coaſt, than on former occaſions: but if theſe expenſive bonds and cockets are ſtill permitted, the coaſting-trade on grain will be much checked, and its price on Carron ſhore will be more affected by that circumſtance, than in any other part of Scotland. This will appear plain to thoſe who attend ſufficiently to the nature of the trade carried on in that quarter.

A GREAT

A GREAT many of the northern and cheapeſt counties of Scotland, are chiefly ſupplied with coals, lime, and ſalt from the Frith of Forth. For ſome one or other of theſe articles, there are many veſſels daily coming from the northward in ballaſt. But if, in conſequence of the demand from the weſt coaſt, a ſteady market ſhould be eſtabliſhed on the Carron ſhore for all kinds of grain, (a circumſtance that muſt unavoidably happen), private perſons in theſe northern counties would have ſuch frequent opportunities of ſending their grain in ſmall quantities, as it was threſhed out and ſweet, by theſe retour ſhips, without almoſt any freight, that none of theſe veſſels would ever arrive without bringing conſiderable quantities of grain with them; which could not fail to moderate the prices at the Carron market, were they freed of the trouble and expence of theſe bonds and cockets, which have hitherto put an entire ſtop to this kind of trade, and muſt continue to prevent it ſo long as they are tolerated. The removing of this ſingle grievance, would have been of more conſequence to the inhabitants of Glaſgow and others, than all the other grievances they have held up to the public attention, with ſuch pomp of declamation, in their noted memorial.

NOTHING can appear more abſurd and ridiculous, than the forms required at the cuſtom-houſe, in the coaſting corn-trade at preſent; and I am convinced they have been only tolerated becauſe they have been hitherto overlooked. At the very time that exportation is not only permitted, but a bounty is alſo granted for carrying it into foreign parts, no man is at liberty to ſend a few bolls of grain by ſea a dozen of miles to a friend, without entering into a formal bond to the king, with ſurety; in which the party ſhipping ſuch grain binds himſelf, under a very high penalty, not to export the ſame into any other country, but to land it in ſome part of Great-Britain; and for this bond, and the certificate neceſſary for retiring it, a conſiderable fee muſt be paid. I believe it is hardly poſſible to produce an inſtance of a more abſurd regulation; and I am diſpoſed to think, that if it were worth any man's while to ſtand an action before any court for refuſing it, he would be honourably acquitted; (for I know of no law, *unrepealed*, by which they are authoriſed to demand it). But the ſum required from each individual for any ſingle tranſaction of this kind, is ſo ſmall, when compared with the expence of a trial, that every man is diſpoſed rather to

ſubmit

ſubmit tamely to this impoſition; and the intereſts of the community at large are ſacrificed to that of a few cuſtom-houſe officers.

An amendment of the law propoſed, reſpecting this article.

LET it therefore be inſerted as a clauſe in the preſent act, that when the price of wheat, flour, oat-meal, or any other ſort of grain, is ſo low as to admit of ſuch kind of grain, flour, or oat-meal, reſpectively, to be exported from the country, whether with or without bounty, it ſhall be lawful for any perſon to lade, on board of any ſhip, any quantity of grain, whether for exportation or for tranſporting to any one part of the iſland from another, without paying any duty, or any fees, for permiſſion to ſhip the ſame. It is imagined this would be ſufficient to prevent all manner of fraud; becauſe the clearance of the veſſel from the port from which ſhe ſailed, would be enough to guard againſt importing grain from any other country, under colour of a coaſting trade; as ſuch a bulky commodity could not be taken up at ſea.

BUT if it ſhould appear to any one, that the ſimple clearance of a veſſel would not be ſufficient to guard againſt frauds when importation was prohibited by law, let it be enacted, That when the price of any kind of grain is below the rate at which exportation is permitted, it ſhall be lawful for any perſon intending to ſhip ſuch kind of grain, flour, or oat-meal, to demand from the cuſtom-houſe officer, at the port where ſuch grain, flour, or oat-meal, is to be ſhipped, a permit for ſhipping the ſame; which permit the cuſtom-houſe officer ſhall be obliged to grant without fee or reward. And when the prices are ſo high as that any particular kind of grain, flour, or oat-meal, cannot by law be exported to foreign parts, every perſon intending to ſhip ſuch particular kind of grain, flour, or oat-meal, to be carried coaſt-ways, ſhall become bound to his Majeſty, his heirs and ſucceſſors, with one other ſurety, &c. (in the ſame terms as, in the 13th of his preſent Majeſty, is provided for thoſe who ſhall ſhip grain for Gibraltar, Guernſey, Jerſey, &c.) that the ſaid grain, &c. ſhall be landed in ſome part of Great-Britain, under the ſame penalties, &c. as are provided for this purpoſe in the foreſaid act: eſpecially, "that for taking ſuch ſecurity, and giving "ſuch certificate, for recovering the bond, (which the reſpec- "tive officers are hereby required on demand to give), *no fee or "reward ſhall be demanded or received.*" I copy this article from the ſtatute itſelf, to ſhow that nothing new is here required.

Cuſtom-houſe bonds and certificates to be granted without fee or reward.

I HAVE

I HAVE thus taken great pains to inveſtigate, with all the preciſion and impartiality I was able, the nature and operation of the law granting a bounty on the exportation of grain, with a view to enable the inhabitants of Scotland to determine what particular regulations it would be moſt for the intereſt of the community to adopt in their particular ſituation. I have choſen all along to explain the general principles upon which the particular regulations propoſed are founded, not only with a view to prevent many objections that would have taken their riſe from an imperfect examination of the ſubject, and to enable others to apply theſe principles to any particular caſe that may occur on other occaſions; but alſo to put it in the power of every one to correct any miſtakes that I myſelf may have committed in applying theſe principles to the particular caſe in queſtion. I am far from thinking, that in this ſhort tract, written in haſte, and no time left for cautious reviſal, all the circumſtances neceſſary to be attended to on this ſubject have been ſufficiently examined, or entirely diſcuſſed: for all which omiſſions, I humbly crave the reader's indulgence. But from what has been ſuggeſted above, I am in hopes that the candid reader will be diſpoſed to allow, that the following particulars are clearly demonſtrated: viz.

THAT the rate at which importation of foreign grain is permitted in any country, if placed very high, will not of itſelf tend to inſure permanent high prices, nor benefit either the proprietor or farmer, but rather the reverſe.

THAT the importation-rate, if placed very low, will not of itſelf neceſſarily inſure cheapneſs of grain, but rather the reverſe.

THAT the importation-rate of oats or oat-meal, in a nation ſo ſituated as Scotland, unleſs it is placed *extremely* low, cannot materially affect the price of that article in our market.

THAT the price of grain can only be effectually regulated by means of a bounty granted upon the exportation of it, juſtly proportioned to the exigency of the caſe, aſſiſted, in a barren country, by an equitable importation-rate.

THAT an invariable bounty on exportation, whatever be its amount, and in whatever manner the importation-rate is fixed, is neither fitted effectually to prevent the prices from falling unreaſonably low in times of great plenty, nor from riſing to too great a height in times of ſcarcity; but that ſuch a bounty muſt

rather

rather in ſome caſes tend to encreaſe this laſt inconvenience. And,

THAT all the beneficial effects that may be produced by a bounty on exportation can only be fully experienced, when the importation-rate is fixed at a proper medium, proportioned to the particular caſe in queſtion, and when the bounty is made to vary in proportion to the ſelling price of grain in the home-market; the amount of which bounty muſt be proportioned to the nature of the country where it is granted, and the ſtate of the markets to which it can be carried: but that, by a due attention to all theſe particulars, and by that alone, the price of grain may be kept at all times nearly at one rate, ſubject to very little variation, and that as low as the nature of things can poſſibly admit. This therefore is the only proper mode of beſtowing a bounty on the exportation of grain.

I HAVE purpoſely avoided, through the whole of this tract, drawing any parallel between the practice of England in any particular caſe, and that recommended for Scotland; becauſe, as every regulation ought to be exactly proportioned to the nature of the country itſelf for which that regulation is made, it is merely accidental if any rule drawn from the practice of others would be proper for ourſelves; and as the minds of men might be thus greatly miſled, it was judged better to endeavour to diſcover a rule for ourſelves in all caſes, ſo as that it might be fixed according to juſtice and equity.

FOR the ſame reaſon I have paid no attention to the prices at which the bounty is allowed or diſcontinued in England, nor have expreſſed any anxiety to proportion the amount of the bounty to any thing that has been eſtabliſhed in that country. It is nature that fixes the price in every country; and all that the moſt perfect political regulation can accompliſh, is to remove thoſe obſtructions that prevent the uniform operation of natural cauſes. Our buſineſs, therefore, ought to be to obtain a perfect knowledge of the nature and circumſtances of our own particular caſe, and adapt our rules to it, without regard to thoſe rules that others may find it neceſſary or prudent to adopt.

TO conclude, I have enquired with candour, and expreſſed myſelf with freedom; and I ſhall be happy if any thing here ſuggeſted ſhall be the means of making this ſubject be more generally underſtood than it hitherto has been.

SUPPLEMENT.

Prejudices of the Glaſgow manufacturers againſt the propoſed bill.

SINCE the above was ſent to preſs, I am ſorry to obſerve, that the minds of the manufacturing part of the nation are exceedingly inflamed againſt the propoſed amendment of the corn-laws, thinking it is an iniquitous attempt in the gentlemen of landed property to promote their own intereſt at the expence of the manufacturers of Scotland; who are, to all appearance, fully convinced, that if the propoſed bill ſhould paſs into a law, it would be attended with the moſt ruinous conſequences to them. I therefore think it neceſſary to add a few more obſervations, with an intention, if poſſible, to allay theſe heats, and to induce all parties calmly to view the ſubject, diveſted of thoſe prejudices which are ſo apt to magnify fancied inconveniencies into real misfortunes. And, that what I have to offer on this head may be the better attended to, I beg leave to premiſe, that no perſon can be more ſincerely deſirous of promoting the manufactures of Scotland than myſelf, and that few have been at greater pains to diſcover the means by which they may be effectually encouraged, than I have been. Before the preſent conteſt was begun or dreamt of, I had demonſtrated, with all the force of reaſoning I was maſter of, that the intereſts of agriculture and manufactures are ſo inſeparably connected, that it is the higheſt pitch of folly to attempt to disjoin them, and that every ſuch attempt muſt be attended with certain loſs to both parties: I had ſhowed, that the little progreſs hitherto made in the improvements of agriculture in Scotland is to be in a great meaſure attributed to the neglect of manufactures, and that there is not a poſſibility of ever procuring a ſpirited agriculture in this country, except by encouraging manufactures; but that, by a judicious encouragement of *theſe*, the agriculture and commerce of Scotland might be effectually promoted, and all ranks of people in it live in eaſe or affluence.

Manufacturers ought not to be diſtreſſed.

THESE being my real ſentiments, I would fain hope that the manufacturing part of this country would not ſuſpect, that I would be unreaſonably biaſſed in favour of any meaſure that ſhould have a tendency to hurt them; and if I ſhould ſay, that

after

after beſtowing a very conſiderable degree of attention to the matter in diſpute, I can diſcover no ſufficient grounds for their preſent apparent uneaſineſs; I might hope they would be diſpoſed to weigh the arguments upon which this opinion is founded, with attention; not as the ſuggeſtions of prejudice, but as the reſult of deliberate conviction, at leaſt on my part, upon the equity of which they might with ſafety rely, till theſe arguments ſhall be diſproved by others equally unprejudiced. And I promiſe, that I ſhall no ſooner be convinced of the fallacy of any argument here advanced, or of its pernicious tendency to any part of the community, than I ſhall publicly retract ſuch opinion, and correct the error: for I have no other motive for taking up the pen at preſent, but barely to inform my countrymen of what I am convinced it imports them much to know; and to lend what aſſiſtance I can in diſcovering the truth, on a very important and intricate ſubject. He who aſſiſts in diſcovering the truth, is of my party,—and not he who ſhall join in opinion with me, if he is conſcious that ſuch opinion is not well founded.

The bill is not intended to hurt them

THAT ſome narrow-minded zealots may have wiſhed and expected that the Corn-bill, as it was originally propoſed, would have a natural tendency to enhance the price of grain conſiderably, and from this conſideration alone have been very warmly intereſted in its favour, I will not deny. Weak men are to be met with in every party, and will reaſon inconſiſtently on every ſubject: and that thoſe who have reaſoned in this manner have done ſo, I have endeavoured to prove in the preceding part of this Eſſay. But that either the perſons who introduced the bill had this object principally in view, or that the gentlemen of landed property *in general* have the ſmalleſt deſire to oppreſs the manufacturing part of this country, I ſee not the ſmalleſt reaſon to believe. Nay, ſo far is this from being the caſe, that, in compliance with the prejudices of the manufacturing part of the nation, rather than for any good reaſon that can be alledged in ſupport of that meaſure, the gentlemen of ſeveral counties have agreed to recommend fourteen ſhillings and eightpence as a proper importation-rate, inſtead of ſixteen ſhillings, as was originally propoſed, and as it is at preſent by law eſtabliſhed. Surely any unprejudiced perſon who attends to this circumſtance, muſt ſee, that the fears which the lower claſs of manufacturers entertain of the deſigns of their ſuperiors, are groundleſs; and that theſe fears only take their riſe from the malevolent ſuggeſtions of deſigning perſons, who neither

Their fears excited by deſigning perſons without a cauſe.

ther wiſh well to the manufacturing nor the landed intereſt, but who are probably afraid, that if the legiſlature ſhould adopt a more equitable ſyſtem of corn-laws than we at preſent enjoy, they would have leſs room for filling their own pockets, at the expence of all the other parts of the community, by an iniquitous gainful trade. Every individual in the ſtate muſt be benefited by having the price of grain as ſteady as poſſible, ſave corn-merchants alone, whoſe profit is greateſt when the markets are variable. No wonder, then, that they ſhould ſtrenuouſly oppoſe every regulation that would in any degree tend to make the prices more invariable than formerly. And that the neceſſary conſequence of adopting thoſe meaſures chiefly inſiſted on by the people of Glaſgow, and the other deluded manufacturers who follow their ſyſtem, would only be to make the prices more variable than at preſent, I ſhall now endeavour to ſhow.

Manufactures would not be benefited, if the Glaſgow memorial was complied with

IT is contended for by them, that the importation-rate of oats or oat-meal ſhould not exceed thirteen ſhillings and fourpence *per* boll; and that this price ſhould be aſcertained at Glaſgow itſelf, rather than at Edinburgh, or any other place. The pretext for this propoſed amendment, as they call it, is, that it will keep the price of meal very low, which will greatly encourage the manufactures in the weſt of Scotland. Now, although it be allowed, that it is greatly for the intereſt of the nation that the price of every neceſſary of life be *permanently* as low as poſſible, and that the manufactures of Scotland would be greatly encouraged if the price of oat-meal *had been before*, and *could ſtill be kept* ſteadily as low as five ſhillings *per* boll or under; it does not from thence follow, that it would be prudent in the legiſlature to attempt it, or practicable in them to reduce it to that rate. It will be allowed, that if our manufacturers could ſell their linen at ninepence inſtead of a ſhilling *per* yard, the demand would be encreaſed, and the manufacture of courſe be greatly encouraged; but will any one ſay, that the price of linen could be reduced from a ſhilling to ninepence, and kept *permanently* at that price by any decree of the legiſlature? Suppoſing it ſhould be attempted, and it ſhould be declared unlawful to demand above ninepence *per* yard for ſuch linens, thoſe linens that were ready manufactured at the time when the law was made, might indeed be ſold at that price; but unleſs the manufacturer ſhould have a ſufficient profit, at that rate, it is evident, that in conſequence of ſuch

a law, he would quit that employment, and betake himſelf to another; after which time, there would be a neceſſity, either of uſing no more linen, or of giving ſuch a price for it as it could be brought for from ſome other country. The caſe is preciſely the ſame in the manufacture of corn. If the manufacturer (that is the farmer) is obliged to ſell his goods below the price they coſt himſelf, he will be under the neceſſity of quitting that employment and betaking himſelf to another. But as men cannot diſpenſe with the uſe of grain, the manufacturers would in that caſe be obliged to purchaſe from others, not at the low price the legiſlators had fixed, but at ſuch a price as it could be brought for from another country, however high that might be. It hence follows, that either the farmer muſt be paid by the conſumers of his corn ſuch a price as is ſufficient to replace to him, with reaſonable profit, the price that ſuch grain coſts him in rearing, or the inhabitants be reduced to the neceſſity of depending on ſome other nation for their daily ſupply *(a)*. This has been

(a) I FORESEE here a popular objection. It will be ſaid, that the price to the farmer is ſo high only on account of the high rents and avaricious extortions of proprietors. "Lower (ſay they) your rents, "and the farmer will be able to afford his grain cheaper to the con-"ſumer." But if the avarice alone of the proprietors was the cauſe of the dearth of corn, Whence comes it, I may aſk, that the price of grain is always higher on the weſt than on the eaſt coaſt of Scotland? Are the proprietors in the Lothians more tender-hearted and leſs avaricious than thoſe of Clyddeſdale? The truth is, nothing can be more groundleſs than theſe clamours againſt men of landed property. There is no doubt, but that they, as well as every other claſs of men, will be willing to augment their revenue as much as they can, and therefore will always accept of as high a rent for their land as is offered to them. Would merchants or manufacturers do otherwiſe? Would either the one or the other of theſe refuſe, for the goods he offers to ſale in a fair open way, as high a price as the purchaſer is inclined to give? If they would not, it is ſurely with a bad grace that they blame gentlemen for accepting ſuch a rent for their land as farmers, who are ſuppoſed always to underſtand the value of it, ſhall chuſe to offer them.

IT is not, however, the rent of the land that determines the price of its produce, but it is the price of that produce which determines the rent of the land; although the price of that produce is often higheſt

been already demonſtrated, and I repeat it here only that it may make the ſtronger impreſſion on the mind of ordinary readers.

But the reverſe.

In the former part of this Eſſay, it has been ſhown, that for twenty years paſt the average ſelling price of oat-meal has been in

higheſt in thoſe countries where the rent of land is loweſt. This ſeems to be a paradox that deſerves to be explained.

IN every country there is a demand for as much grain as is ſufficient to maintain all its inhabitants; and as that grain cannot be brought from other countries but at a conſiderable expence, on ſome occaſions at a moſt exorbitant charge, it uſually happens, that the inhabitants find it moſt for their intereſt to be fed by the produce of their own ſoil. But the price at which that produce can be afforded by the farmer varies conſiderably in different circumſtances.

IN every country there is a variety of ſoils, differing conſiderably from one another in point of fertility. Theſe we ſhall at preſent ſuppoſe arranged into different claſſes, which we ſhall denote by the letters A, B, C, D, E, F, &c. the claſs A comprehending the ſoils of the greateſt fertility, and the other letters expreſſing different claſſes of ſoils, gradually decreaſing in fertility as you recede from the firſt. Now, as the expence of cultivating the leaſt fertile ſoil is as great, or greater than that of the moſt fertile field; it neceſſarily follows, that if an equal quantity of corn, the produce of each field, can be ſold at the ſame price, the profit on cultivating the moſt fertile ſoil muſt be much greater than that of cultivating the others; and as this continues to decreaſe as the ſterility encreaſes, it muſt at length happen, that the expence of cultivating ſome of the inferior claſſes will equal the value of the whole produce.

THIS being premiſed, let us ſuppoſe, that the claſs F includes all thoſe fields whoſe produce in oat-meal, if ſold at fourteen ſhillings *per* boll, would be juſt ſufficient to pay the expence of cultivating them, without affording any rent at all: That the claſs E comprehended thoſe fields, whoſe produce, if ſold at thirteen ſhillings *per* boll, would free the charges, without affording any rent; and that in like manner the claſſes D, C, B, and A, conſiſted of fields, whoſe produce, if ſold reſpectively at twelve, eleven, ten, and nine ſhillings *per* boll, would exactly pay the charge of culture, without any rent.

LET us now ſuppoſe that all the inhabitants of the country, where ſuch fields are placed, could be ſuſtained by the produce of the firſt four claſſes, viz. A, B, C, and D. It is plain, that if the average ſelling price of oat-meal in that country was twelve ſhillings *per* boll, thoſe who

in Mid-Lothian about thirteen ſhillings *per* boll; and this we muſt ſuppoſe, in the circumſtances in which Scotland was placed during that period, was the average price for which it could be afforded by the farmer. During all that time the price of oat-

who poſſeſſed the fields D, could juſt afford to cultivate them, without paying any rent at all; ſo that if there were no other produce of the fields that could be reared at a ſmaller expence than corn, the farmer could afford no rent whatever to the proprietor for them. And if ſo, no rents could be afforded for the fields E and F; nor could the utmoſt avarice of the proprietor in this caſe extort a rent for them. In theſe circumſtances, however, it is obvious, that the farmer who poſſeſſed the fields in the claſs C could pay the expence of cultivating them, and alſo afford to the proprietor a rent equal to one ſhilling for every boll of their produce; and in like manner the poſſeſſors of the fields B and A could afford a rent equal to two and three ſhillings *per* boll of their produce reſpectively. Nor would the proprietors of theſe fields find any difficulty in obtaining theſe rents; becauſe farmers, finding they could live equally well upon ſuch ſoils, though paying theſe rents, as they could do upon the fields D without any rent at all, would be equally willing to take the one as the other.

BUT let us again ſuppoſe, that the whole produce of the fields A, B, C and D, was *not* ſufficient to maintain the whole of the inhabitants. If the average ſelling price ſhould continue at twelve ſhillings *per* boll, as none of the fields E or F could admit of being cultivated, the inhabitants would be under the neceſſity of bringing grain from ſome other country, to ſupply their wants. But if it ſhould be found, that grain could not be brought from that other country, at an average, under thirteen ſhillings *per* boll, the price in the home-market would riſe to that rate; ſo that the fields E could then be brought into culture, and thoſe of the claſs D could afford a rent to the proprietor equal to what was formerly yielded by C, and ſo on of others; the rents of every claſs riſing in the ſame proportion. If theſe fields were ſufficient to maintain the whole of the inhabitants, the price would remain permanently at thirteen ſhillings; but if there was ſtill a deficiency, and if that could not be made up for leſs than fourteen ſhillings *per* boll, the price would riſe in the market to that rate; in which caſe the field F might alſo be brought into culture, and the rents of all the others would riſe in proportion.

TO apply this reaſoning to the preſent caſe, it appears, that the people

oat-meal in Glaſgow and that neighbourhood has been ſteadily near a ſhilling *per* boll higher than at Edinburgh. To what cauſe are we to aſcribe this difference of price between theſe two places, unleſs it be to the greater fertility of the ſoil, or more favourable

people in the Lothians can be maintained by the produce of the fields A, B, C, D, and E, but the inhabitants of Clyddeſdale require alſo the produce of the fields F; ſo that the one is under the neceſſity of giving, at an average, one ſhilling *per* boll more for meal than the other.

LET us now ſuppoſe, that the gentlemen of Clyddeſdale, from an extraordinary exertion of patriotiſm, and an inordinate deſire to encourage manufactures, ſhould reſolve to lower their rents, ſo as to demand nothing from thoſe who poſſeſſed the fields E, as well as thoſe of the claſs F, and ſhould allow the rents of all the others to ſink in proportion; Would the prices of grain fall in conſequence of this? By no means. The inhabitants are ſtill in need of the whole produce of the fields F as before, and are under the neceſſity of paying the farmer of theſe fields ſuch a price as to enable him to cultivate them. He muſt therefore ſtill receive fourteen ſhillings *per* boll as formerly. And as the grain from the fields E, D, C, B, and A, are at leaſt equally good, the occupiers of ſuch of theſe fields would receive the ſame price for their produce. The only conſequence, then, that would reſult from this Quixot ſcheme, would be the enriching one claſs of farmers at the expence of their proprietors, without producing the ſmalleſt benefit to the conſumers of grain—perhaps the reverſe, as the induſtry of theſe farmers might be ſlackened by this meaſure.

If, on the other hand, by any political arrangement, the price of oat-meal ſhould be there reduced from fourteen to thirteen ſhillings *per* boll, it would neceſſarily follow, that all the fields of the claſs F would be abandoned by the plough, and the rents of the others would fall of courſe: but with that fall of rent, the quantity of grain produced would be diminiſhed, and the inhabitants would be reduced to the neceſſity of depending on others for their daily bread. Thus it appears, that the rents are not at all arbitrary, but depend on the market-price of grain; which, in its turn, depends upon the effective demand that is for it, and the fertility of the ſoil in the diſtrict where it is raiſed: ſo that lowering of rents alone could never have the effect of rendering grain cheaper.

BUT as fields, which were originally in the loweſt claſſes, may, by good culture, be ſo far improved, as in time to rank among thoſe of

favourable climate in the eaſt than on the weſtern coaſts, in conſequence of which a boll of meal coſts the manufacturer near a ſhilling more in the one country than in the other. By this teſt, it appears plain, that the prime coſt of meal on the weſt coaſt of Scotland

a higher claſs, if proper meaſures are purſued to give ſtability to the markets, and due encouragement to the farmer, it will naturally happen, that the price of grain will gradually fall lower than before, while the rents may alſo riſe. And as this effect can never be produced but in conſequence of ſpirited agriculture, it follows, that the only practicable means of lowering the price of grain to manufacturers, and, at the ſame time, of improving the revenue of landed gentlemen, is to give ſtability to the markets, and ſecurity to the farmer; which would be much promoted by an equitable ſyſtem of Corn-laws.

A NECESSARY inference that follows from the foregoing reaſoning is, that if manufactures flouriſh in any particular diſtrict more than formerly, ſo as to make the population encreaſe, there will of courſe be an encreaſed demand for proviſions. But if agriculture has not been duly encouraged, ſo as to promote improvements in that art, (I call that only an improvement in agriculture, when any particular field is made to afford more ſuſtenance to man on an average of years, than it did formerly), there will be a neceſſity of raiſing the market-price of grain ſo high, as to pay for the expence of cultivating more barren fields, (ſuppoſe thoſe of the claſs G), to ſupply that encreaſing demand.

BUT if the population ſhould thus encreaſe, and if, inſtead of giving a higher encouragement to agriculture, or raiſing the price of grain, the inhabitants, by any political regulation, ſhould contrive to diminiſh, for a time, the price of grain, while the demand for manufactures continued as before, the profits reaped by the manufacturers would become ſo diſproportionately great, that ſervants, and others employed in the labours of agriculture would betake themſelves to manufactures, unleſs the farmers gave them as much wages as they could obtain at theſe other employments. In conſequence of this, the fields which were formerly in the claſs D, would be puſhed back to the claſs E, and ſo on of others; ſo that it would be impoſſible to rear nearly the ſame quantity of grain as formerly, even if the price continued the ſame as before, and the manufacturers would be under the neceſſity of giving a much higher price for their grain, ſo as to diminiſh their own profits, and drive off the labourers to agriculture again, before they could be ſupplied abundantly with food.

Scotland amounts, on an average of years, to fourteen ſhillings *per* boll nearly. And I have already demonſtrated upon the moſt equitable principles, that unleſs the farmer is inſured of never being obliged at any time to ſell below the medium price, he muſt be allowed to receive at *ſome times* a price conſiderably above it. Hence it follows, that if the people in that part of the country mean to have any reliance on the produce of their own fields, they muſt either provide the farmer with a conſtant ſteady market, at or near that medium price, or grant him a certainty to receive a higher price in years of ſcarcity. In equity and in prudence, therefore, the importation-rate at Glaſgow ought to have been *at leaſt* as high as ſixteen ſhillings *per* boll. But inſtead of this equitable rate, without providing any market to their own farmers in times of great plenty, they propoſe, that the importation-rate ſhould be at thirteen ſhillings and fourpence *per* boll. I am almoſt aſhamed to repeat arguments that have been already explained; yet I think it neceſſary here to point out minutely what would be the natural conſequence of ſuch a regulation to Glaſgow itſelf and its neighbourhood, ſhould ſuch a law take place.

IRELAND

BUT if, inſtead of thus fooliſhly attempting to work impoſſibilities, a regulation was adopted, by which agriculture ſhould receive a ſteady ſupport, farmers would gradually render their fields more fertile than formerly, ſo as to make thoſe of the claſs F come in time to paſs ſucceſſively through the claſſes E, D, and C, &c. perhaps to A; in conſequence of which, the quantity of grain produced, would become fully ſufficient to maintain the whole of the inhabitants, and at a ſmaller expence alſo. The farmer, therefore, might have equal profit, although he ſhould at the ſame time pay an advanced rent for his lands, and ſell its produce at a lower rate than formerly. In this manner it appears, that by adopting judicious meaſures, both agriculture and manufactures may be encouraged. Farmers may become more opulent and independent, the price of grain may be made to decreaſe, and the rents to encreaſe at the ſame time.

THE limits to which I muſt here confine myſelf, prevents me from doing more than drawing this naked outline. Readers of penetration will be able of themſelves to finiſh the ſketch. To others, additional explanations would have been neceſſary; but theſe I muſt at preſent omit.

IRELAND is a much more fertile country, and enjoys a finer climate than the weſt coaſt of Scotland, and therefore corn could be reared cheaper in the firſt than in the laſt of theſe countries: but as Ireland enjoys no ſteady demand for oat-meal, nor can find a market for it (for want of a proper bounty) in years of plenty, their farmers dare not rear ſo much as to inſure themſelves from want in bad years; ſo that the prices on theſe occaſions riſe very high; and as in good years they have much more than enough, and can find no market for it, the price is then extremely low. Hence it happens that, on ſome occaſions, oat-meal can be exported from Scotland to Ireland with profit, even when the prices at home are very high; and on other occaſions, oat-meal might be imported into Scotland, in years of plenty, at a lower rate than it then ſells for in our own market. That this is a true ſtate of the caſe, every man in Glaſgow and that neighbourhood has good opportunities of knowing; and that this furniſhes employment for corn-merchants is not to be doubted, although I am perſuaded, the poor in Glaſgow and that neighbourhood are better acquainted with theſe, and the arts they employ to enhance the prices on particular occaſions, than I can be.

State of the corn-trade between Ireland and the weſt of Scotland.

NOW, if the importation-rate ſhould be fixed at thirteen ſhillings and fourpence, it would follow, that, in years of plenty, great quantities of meal would be poured in from Ireland, which would at theſe times keep the price ſo much below the rate for which it could be reared by the farmers in Scotland, that they would be under the neceſſity of abandoning an art that could not be practiſed without loſs; ſo that the manufacturers would then be obliged to rely on Ireland almoſt entirely for ſupport. But from whence are they to be ſupplied in times of ſcarcity, when Ireland is not only unable to afford them any aid, but muſt herſelf have recourſe to others? A ſcanty crop, we all know, occaſions a conſiderable riſe of price, even in thoſe countries where the inhabitants have nearly enough to ſupport themſelves; but the conſequences that would reſult from a total failure of crop, as would thus happen to them, it is more eaſy to conceive than pleaſant to deſcribe. Glaſgow is far from any other market, and might be in terrible want before the ſupplies from thence could arrive; ſo that intolerable high prices and famine would be the inevitable conſequence.

Bad effects that would reſult from the alteration propoſed by the Glaſgow memorial.

Nor is there a poſſibility of avoiding that, except by encouraging as much as poſſible the manufacture of grain at their own doors; which, even, although ſomewhat ſcanty, will prevent an intolerable dearth, till ſupplies can be brought from other quarters: nor can this be done by any other way than by inſuring to the farmer, *on an average*, the price at which his corn could be reared for and brought to market. The amendment therefore that they propoſe, would be productive of the very worſt conſequences to the manufacturing part of the community, and therefore, in pity to them, it ought on no account to be complied with, although they ſhould be ſo ſhort-ſighted as to wiſh for it themſelves.

Illuſtrated by a parallel caſe from the hiſtory of France.

THE reaſoning from which this concluſion is drawn, is ſo clear and unexceptionable that it might be ſafely relied upon, even although we know of no facts by which it might be corroborated: but when we likewiſe can prove from hiſtory, that exactly ſuch conſequences have reſulted from ſimilar regulations, it acquires, if poſſible, a ſtill greater force and irreſiſtible authority. About a hundred years ago Mr Colbert, in conſequence of an unreaſonable predilection in favour of manufactures, deſirous of making the manufactures of France flouriſh more than in any other country, made many regulations exactly ſimilar to thoſe contended for at preſent by the Glaſgow memorialiſts, in hopes of thus reducing the price of grain extremely low in that country, by which means he expected to enable the French manufacturers to underſell all others in every foreign market. But, unfortunately for them, this meaſure, which was intended to favour them, became the greateſt bane to the manufactures of France. Agriculture was in ſome meaſure deſerted, the prices having fallen at firſt unreaſonably low; but this was ſoon after ſucceeded by prices as extravagantly high, which involved all ranks of perſons in the greateſt diſtreſs, and made France become dependent on others for grain, inſtead of ſupplying them with that neceſſary article, as ſhe uſed to do before theſe regulations took place. Would it not be highly abſurd in us, who have ſuch a ſtriking example before our eyes of the pernicious tendency of ſuch counſels, to adopt a meaſure, which, although apparently calculated to relieve the poor, has a real tendency to involve them in the greateſt diſtreſs?

THE above might be ſufficient, one would think, to ſatisfy any reaſonable perſon of the inexpediency of the meaſure propoſed by the Glaſgow memorialiſts. But it would be attended with ſo many other inconveniencies, that a volume might be filled with the bare enumerating of them. This I ſhall not attempt; but ſhall beg leave to put one caſe, which will ſhow the real tendency of the propoſed alteration in a very ſtriking light, and give the inhabitants of Glaſgow a notion of the perſons whom alone it is calculated to ſerve.

A particular delineation of the iniquitous corn-trade propoſed to be opened in conſequence of the alterations they demand.

IT does not appear that the Glaſgow memorialiſts have made any objection to the bounty on exportation propoſed to be granted by the preſent bill. Nor was it to be expected they ſhould do ſo, as we ſhall find, that it would afford the fineſt fund for the ingenuity of the merchant to operate upon, that could poſſibly be deſired. I do not recollect (for I have not the memorial itſelf at hand) that there is even any price mentioned by them at which exportation ſhould be ſtopt, and the bounty be diſcontinued; but for the preſent, we ſhall ſuppoſe, that if, according to their prayer, thirteen ſhillings and fourpence was fixed on as the importation-rate at Glaſgow, &c. exportation ſhould ceaſe when the price was as high as thirteen ſhillings; and upon theſe *data*, I ſhall endeavour to ſee what would be the immediate conſequences.

LET us ſuppoſe then, that a year of plenty ſhould follow this regulation, both in Scotland and Ireland, ſo that the price of oat-meal might have been, if things had remained in their preſent ſtate, about eleven ſhillings *per* boll in the weſt of Scotland, and ten ſhillings in Ireland. At this rate, exportation would be permitted from Scotland, and the bounty might be claimed. Now, as I ſuppoſe the freight of oat-meal from Port-Glaſgow to Ireland could not exceed threepence or fourpence *per* boll, it is evident that the corn-merchants of Glaſgow could buy up oat-meal in that country at eleven ſhillings, ſhip it off for Ireland, and there ſell it at ten ſhillings *per* boll, with a clear profit to themſelves of fourteen or fifteen pence *per* boll. Such a temptation is not to be withſtood. Great quantities would be bought up as ſuddenly as poſſible, and exported. And ſuch quantities might be bought up by artful dealers, with ſkilful emiſſaries, at this low price, before much was ſhipped off, that when theſe quantities were collected together and carried away,

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a ſcarcity would be immediately apprehended, ſo as to raiſe the price above thirteen ſhillings and fourpence; which ſcarcity might be ſtill farther encreaſed by a ſkilful management of the market on the Carron ſhore, a little before the time that the prices ſhould be aſcertained by the ſheriff. In conſequence of theſe meaſures, properly concerted and put in execution, there could be no doubt but at the next quarter-day, it would be declared, that importation might be permitted; and as this would be foreſeen by the monied merchants, whom the profits of this trade would bring into it, they would take care to have their magazines at Carron, and on the weſt coaſt, fully ſtored, before the ports were opened, to be ready to take advantage of the firſt ſpurt at the market. And as this meal would be bought in Ireland at or under ten ſhillings, and might probably be ſold out for ſome time at fourteen or fifteen ſhillings *per* boll, their profits would be enormous. In a ſhort time, however, the prices in Scotland would neceſſarily fall; and the merchants would again prepare for a new exportation. Quantities would be bought up at theſe low rates, and ſtored before the next quarter-day, when the ports would inevitably be ſhut againſt importation, and opened for exportation. The meal on hand would then be immediately ſhipped off for Ireland, and the bounty again pocketed by the merchants as before. Prices in Scotland, in conſequence of this great exportation, would again riſe, while they would fall in Ireland; meal would be again bought in this laſt country, and ſtored in Scotland as before, with a view to ſupply the demand that would ariſe after the next quarter-day, when there would be again an abſolute neceſſity for opening the ports. And ſo on the circulation would continue. Was there ever a plan of commerce ſchemed out that would be attended with greater or more certain profits than this one? Is it then a wonder, that thoſe who have it in view ſhould exert their utmoſt efforts to impoſe upon the ignorant, ſo as to raiſe a party in favour of a plan which they do not underſtand? But is it right in men of ſound underſtandings to allow themſelves to be impoſed on by ſpecious pretexts? or are thoſe excuſable, who ſee through the flimſy veil that covers this iniquitous deſign, and do not expoſe the pernicious tendency of it to the deluded multitude; who, like the followers of Circe, adore as gods thoſe who are leading them to inevitable deſtruction?

Ruinous conſequences that would reſult from it.

I WILL not farther endeavour to purſue this diſagreeable inveſtigation

veſtigation, nor trace with a ſcrupulous minuteneſs, the direful conſequences that muſt enſue in *years of ſcarcity*, ſhould this plan be adopted, hoping that what has been already ſaid, will be ſufficient to convince readers of every claſs, of the exceeding pernicious tendency of the plan propoſed by the Glaſgow memorialiſts. Could a legiſlature, however, be found weak enough to comply with their prayer; it is evident, that the profits of this trade would be ſo enormous, as to induce men of the firſt capitals in the kingdom to engage in it. And if two or three capital houſes were thus engaged, they could ſo entirely monopolize the whole, as to have a perfect command of the market-prices at all times, and be able to ruin any private trader who ſhould ſet up in oppoſition to them. In which ſtate, the inhabitants of the weſt coaſt of Scotland, might in a ſhort time be reduced to diſtreſſes almoſt equally great with thoſe that the natives of Bengal experienced ſome years ago. Such a thing, however, is not to be dreaded in Britain, as the prayers of the diſtreſſed inhabitants would reach parliament long before the grievance had attained its full height. But it is better to prevent than to remove evils; this therefore ought ſurely to be guarded againſt.

The bounty to Ireland ought to be lower than to any other country.

IN purſuing this argument, I have diſcovered a circumſtance that had eſcaped me, as well as every other perſon who has written on this ſubject, viz. the impropriety of granting the ſame bounty on exportation to Ireland, as to other places. If the bounty is to be *fixed*, it ought not at moſt to be above one half of what is allowed for exportation to any other country; perhaps it were better that no bounty at all ſhould be allowed. If a *variable* bounty be granted, as propoſed in this work, the inconvenience would be ſmall, if the prices at Edinburgh regulated the exportation-rate; but, even in this caſe, it ought not to be more than the half of what is granted to any other place.

The meaſures ought to be the ſame for regulating importation and exportation.

I SHALL here alſo take notice of another ſmall incongruity in the propoſed bill, that ſeems to have eſcaped the attention of all parties, viz. the making the duty payable on the importation of oats or oat-meal to be regulated by the Engliſh quarter; whereas every thing elſe relating to the commerce of this kind of grain in Scotland is to be regulated by the Scots boll. The inconvenience that ariſes from the uſe of different weights and meaſures is already too great, and ought not to be unreaſonably augment-

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ed, which this would do. If this clauſe did not ſlip into the bill through inadvertency, it could only have been done with an intention to moderate the duty; but this had better be done by moderating the duty openly. It indeed appears abſurd to demand any duty at all on the importaton of grain, when the avowed intention of that importation is to moderate the prices in our markets.

Propriety of making the price of grain at Edinburgh be the ſtandard for all Scotland for regulating export and import.

so much for the importation-price. With regard to the expediency of making the prices of oats at Edinburgh regulate the importation or exportation prices over all Scotland, the following remarks at preſent occur. From what has been juſt now ſaid, we may perceive what a bad uſe might be made of entruſting the power of opening or ſhutting the ports by the ſheriffs on the weſt coaſt. Were that power confined entirely to thoſe in Mid-Lothian, it would not be in the power of the corn-merchants to regulate that matter at pleaſure, as they otherwiſe could do; ſo that were there no other reaſon for it but this one alone, I ſhould think it ſufficient to over-rule every objection I have yet ſeen. But there is another argument of a more general nature, that ſhows the expediency of it in a ſtill ſtronger degree. It is this.

SINCE it is impoſſible for any laws to regulate the price at which corn can be raiſed by the farmer in any place, as that muſt conſtantly depend upon the fertility or barrenneſs of the particular place, in concurrence with other natural cauſes; and ſince it is the intereſt of the inhabitants of every diſtrict to be fed, if poſſible, by the grain that is raiſed in that diſtrict, it ought to be the ſtudy of each to adopt ſuch regulations as ſhall be beſt calculated to encourage the production of grain in that diſtrict. But as the importation-rate, as well as that at which a bounty ought to be allowed, and every thing relating to the regulating of that bounty ſhould be proportioned to the average price of grain in each particular diſtrict; it will follow, that the importation-rate, &c. in a diſtrict where the uſual ſelling price of grain is higher than in another, ought in equity and prudence to be alſo higher there in the ſame proportion. According to this reaſoning, nothing can be more equitable than to fix on any one particular place of principal importance in a country, as a ſtandard for all the reſt; and if due pains is taken to fix the importation-rate of that place at a proper medium,

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and to aſcertain the prices which are to entitle to a bounty properly; it will be unneceſſary to attend to others, as theſe will be higher or lower than that, in every other place, exactly in proportion to the real exigency of the caſe. The method, therefore, that is propoſed in the preſent bill for aſcertaining the prices, viz. by making theſe of Mid-Lothian be conſidered as an univerſal ſtandard, is at the ſame time the eaſieſt, and the moſt ſtrictly conſonant to juſtice and prudence that could poſſibly be deviſed. I am afraid that the reaſoning in this paragraph will to ſome appear abſtruſe, and therefore inconcluſive; but on a ſubject that is naturally involved in ſuch intricacy as the preſent, and which requires that the ſtricteſt attention ſhould be had to very nice diſtinctions, there is no avoiding ſomething of this nature. It is impoſſible to give a perſon, without a proper education, a clear idea of the manner in which inacceſſible diſtances may be meaſured; but if he inſiſts upon being told in what manner it may be done, ſomething muſt be ſaid, which, although intelligible enough to thoſe who have had their minds properly prepared to receive ſuch inſtruction, will probably appear to him abſtruſe and incomprehenſible.

Expediency of permitting oatmeal to be warehouſed.

THE ſubject of the Corn-laws is in itſelf ſo intricate, that it is not ſurpriſing if different perſons ſhould view it in very different lights. I find by the reſolutions of the gentlemen of ſeveral counties, that many of them imagine, that the permitting the warehouſing of grain, as by law allowed at preſent, is prejudicial to the intereſt of this country; and although I am at a loſs for diſcovering a good reaſon for this opinion, I doubt not but there is ſome reaſon for this that I have not been able to find out. In hopes that ſome perſon will unfold theſe reaſons to the public, I ſhall in the mean time offer ſome reflections that occur on that head.

IF, indeed, an invariable bounty ſhould be granted on exportation, and if the importation-rate was fixed very low, I can figure a caſe in which it might be attended with inconveniencies. This has been already taken notice of, when treating of the commerce of corn between Glaſgow and Ireland. But as the other countries with which we trade in this article lie at a much greater diſtance, and as the expence of tranſporting it to theſe countries would be much greater than to Ireland, the temptation would be proportionally diminiſhed. For, as the

expence of tranſporting it to any of theſe countries, and bringing it back again to Britain, would be at leaſt equal to the whole bounty, merchants never would be under the temptation of exporting with a view to re-import, except when prices were ſo high at home, as afforded the higheſt probability that there would be a neceſſity to open the ports for importation; and if the probability of this was very great, the exportation would almoſt equally take place with this view, if warehouſing were totally prohibited. This therefore is an affair that rather concerns the revenue than the farmer: it exhauſts the former very unneceſſarily indeed; but as it would rather tend to raiſe than to lower the price of grain, it does not appear how it would diſcourage the agriculture of Scotland. I have already ſhown that this inconvenience might be entirely obviated, by making the bounty vary with the price of grain.

I OWN, that I cannot figure a ſingle arrangement of circumſtances, in which the warehouſing of meal or other grain could prove detrimental to the country, if *the actual ſelling price at the time* ſhall always regulate the importation or exportation; becauſe if, in that caſe, merchants ſhould import any conſiderable quantities, it would only be when there was next to a demonſtrable certainty that the quantity of grain in this country was ſo obviouſly deficient, as to inſure the opening of the ports within a ſhort time; in which caſe, although theſe quantities imported would lower the price a little, or prevent it from riſing ſo very high, as it might do were we obliged to wait for ſupplies till they could be commiſſioned; for after the ſcarcity was actually felt, this would only prevent the farmer from receiving an unreaſonable profit that he ought not in equity to obtain, and relieve the reſt of the community from very great diſtreſs.

Expediency of aſcertaining the prices frequently.

IF, indeed, no perſon had power either to ſhut or to open the ports but at the end of three months, as at preſent, there is a poſſibility that merchants might contrive means to obtain unreaſonable profits by that liberty *on ſome occaſions;* although the difficulties attending the execution of this plan are ſo great, as to be but little apprehended. For if the prices in our market were tolerably high, while thoſe abroad were low, the merchants, by making very great exertions, might purchaſe ſuch quantities of meal for exportation as ſhould at length raiſe the

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price in the home-market ſo high as to admit of importation; at which time they could bring back the grain they had formerly exported, and ſell it without any loſs. And although they ſhould have put themſelves to a conſiderable expence in raiſing the price in the home-market, for ſome time before the quarter-day, when the prices were to be fixed, ſo as to get the ports opened for importation; they know, that as the ports could not again be ſhut for three months, they would have an opportunity of indemnifying themſelves abundantly before the ports could again be ſhut. Thus would the prices at home be reduced unreaſonably low ſo as to diſcourage our own agriculture, and the deſign of the law be entirely fruſtrated. But if the ports could be either ſhut or opened in the ſpace of one week, there would be no room for practiſing theſe arts. Theſe evils, however, as well as the former, would be moſt effectually obviated by adopting the plan of a *variable* bounty, as ſuggeſted in the preceding parts of this Eſſay.

Objection.

THE idea of granting a power to open or ſhut the ports at the end of every week, will probably be ſtrenuouſly oppoſed by all thoſe who have any proſpect of engaging in the corn-trade; as it would be an inſurmountable bar in the way of all their ſchemes. They have even objected to the new bill, becauſe it propoſes that the prices ſhould be aſcertained once in thirty days, inſtead of three months, as they would wiſh it to be, under the pretext that it allows too little time for purchaſing and importing corn from any other country. This objection has been ſo pertinently anſwered already in a very well written tract on this ſubject, that as I am happy to have my own opinion corroborated by ſuch a reſpectable authority, I ſhall lay before the reader in his own words *(a)*.

Anſwer.

IT is, ſays he, apprehended that this objection would be almoſt entirely removed by permiſſion to put the cargo, when it does arrive, without paying any duty, into a warehouſe, under the joint lock and key of the cuſtom-houſe and the importers, there

(*a*) THIS tract is entitled, *Conſideration on our Corn-laws, and the Bill propoſed to amend them*, 1777, 12mo, without bookſeller's name, or place of ſale. It is a pity that the author ſhould not have taken more pains to have it effectually publiſhed, and more generally diſperſed.

there to remain till it is re-exported, or till the prices ſhall riſe ſo as to exceed the importation-price.

THE danger which the merchant complains of, is only, that he may find the ports ſhut when the cargo arrives, which was commiſſioned as ſoon as they were opened; but what is the effect to be expected from this apprehenſion. It is only this, that unleſs, by his general correſpondence, he finds there is a *real* want of grain or meal in the country, he will not venture to import. If, notwithſtanding the alteration propoſed by the bill, there ſhould ſtill be a poſſibility of bringing a falſe proof before the judge, (this writer defends the propoſed bill in all its clauſes), ſo as to lead them to open the ports when there is no real ſcarcity, he will ſee that this may be rectified at the end of thirty (or according to the plan propoſed in this Eſſay at the end of ſeven) days, and he will not truſt to it ſo far as to order corn from abroad to anſwer this fictitious want.

THE ſpirit and avowed intention of the law is to prevent importation, except in times of dearth or ſcarcity; and if there is a real dearth or ſcarcity, there is no chance that prices will ſo ſoon fall below the limitations.

ON the other hand, the danger to the country, from extending the time for which the ports are to remain open without a proof, is obvious. If by any art the proof ſhould be brought by which the ports may be opened, when there is no real ſcarcity in the country, and if that ſhall be without remedy for a longer period, let it be ſuppoſed for three months, there is not a doubt but in that time ſuch a quantity may be poured into this country, when prices are low, as to diſtreſs and diſcourage our farmers, and defeat the purpoſe of the law.

A CLAUSE which gives ſo much ſecurity againſt thoſe arts by which the ports have been improperly opened, which ſaves the farmer from being diſcouraged and hurt, and the purpoſe of the law from being defeated, without preventing ſupplies from being brought into the country when they are really neceſſary,—ought not to be given up.

THE END.

The distance at which the Author lives from the place of printing, and the haste with which this Tract was composed, having been sent off sheet by sheet as it was written, without his having had an opportunity of comparing what was gone with what followed, will be accepted of as an apology for any defects of arrangement, accidental repetitions, or other trivial defects of the same kind. Had he intended to write on the present subject before he thought he saw the immediate *utility of it, these defects would have been in some measure prevented; or had he even intended this treatise only for philosophical readers, they might have been diminished; but in attempting to explain such intricate matters to ordinary readers, he was more solicitous about rendering himself in some degree intelligible, than about avoiding a few almost necessary repetitions.*

It is hoped every candid reader will make allowance for the errors of the Press, as the haste in which the foregoing sheets were printed, would not admit of that time which is absolutely necessary for correctness in that way.